



BACK TO OXFORD

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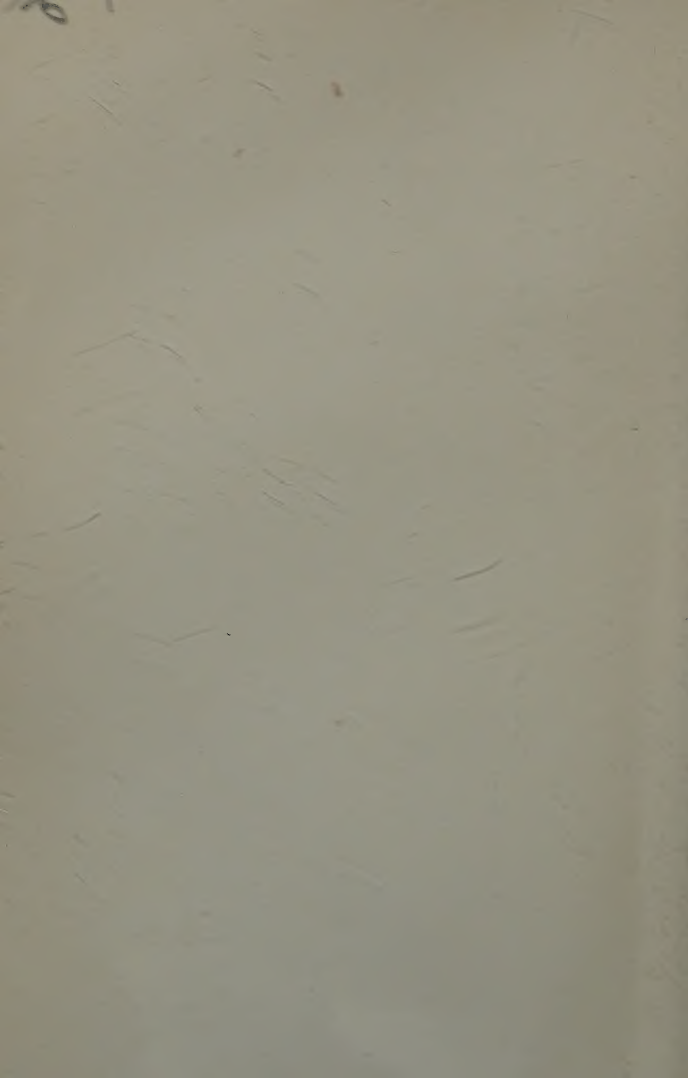
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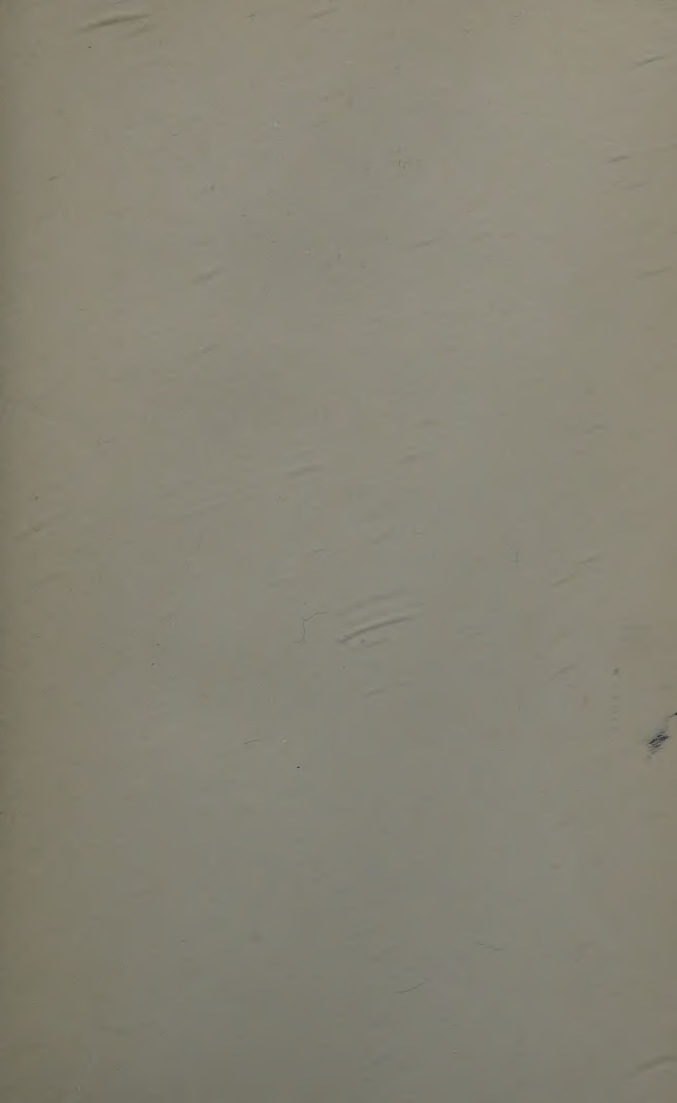
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Back to Oxford

A SEARCH FOR THE

ESSENTIALS OF METHODISM

BY

JAMES HENRY POTTS



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FOREWORD

METHODISM, like other important movements, has certain elements, which either originated with it or sprang into being under it, which constitute its essentials and are necessary to its perpetuity. These elements are its vital life-strands, its ruddy heart-drops, the very essence and proof of its reality. They have given it name, character, history, and prestige. They are the secret of its early power and the cause of its perennial fruitfulness. They render it an interesting theme for study, a worthy subject for prayer, and an inspiring cause for work. They should engage the attention of every lover of earnest Christianity, if happily we, like the Methodist fathers, may in our day prove a tremendous force for righteousness, a resistless power for reformation, and an indispensable agency for spiritual progress.

The world needs unquestionable truth, it needs divine light, it needs moral earnestness,

it needs evangelistic skill, it needs effective leadership in all that elevates, ennobles, purifies, and saves. Can Methodism furnish these requisites? Has it the cardinal principles, the inherent values, the vital forces, the adequate inspirations, the available methods that, under present conditions, can make it a new godsend to society? Let us look into this subject, study it, master it, apply it, develop it, become a part of it, and go with it to victory.

God has been in Methodism. Let us hold fast the things which he has sanctioned and make them a tenfold greater power to call down spiritual blessing now and lift men up to God.

THE AUTHOR.

Detroit.

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BACK TO OXFORD

ORIGIN OF METHODISM

To understand the essentials of Methodism we must study its origin, analyze its character, and consider its work. This will not be an irksome task, because the theme is of such lively interest.

As to the exact moment when Methodism originated, no man knoweth. The *period* of its origin is a matter of history, but not its day and hour.

It was in 1726 when Charles Wesley, "a sprightly, rollicking young fellow, with more genius than grace," was elected to Christ Church, Oxford. John Wesley was then serving as his father's curate at Epworth. John had previously spoken to Charles about experimental religion, but Charles had said,

“What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?”

But Charles began at once to do saintly work. He attended the weekly sacraments, and induced two or three other students to attend with him. When John returned to Oxford he also joined the band. The religious regularity of the boys led a young collegian to call them Methodists, and “as the name was new and quaint it clave to them immediately.” John Wesley became director of the club, the members of which increased until upward of twenty persons—three of whom were college tutors and the rest bachelors of arts, or undergraduates—demonstrated their willingness to suffer reproach under the guidance of “the curator of the Holy Club” as John Wesley was called.

METHOD

“Every night they met together, to review what each had done during the day, and to consult what should be done the day follow-

ing; their meetings always commencing with prayer, and ending with a frugal supper. Their plans of action were various. Some conversed with young students, and endeavored to rescue them from evil company, and to encourage them in a sober and studious life. Others undertook to relieve the distresses of the poor; others, to minister to prisoners; others, to labor in the parish work-house; others, in raising funds to buy medicine, books, and other necessities for the relief of the sick, the unfortunate, the distressed, and the children of poverty.”*

“THE HOLY CLUB”

In the original list of names of these Oxford Methodists were John and Charles Wesley, Robert Kirkham, William Morgan, George Whitefield, John Clayton, J. Broughton, Benjamin Ingham, James Hervey, John Whitelamb, Westley Hall, John Gambold,

* Condensed from Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, vol. 1, pages 70, 71.

Charles Kinchin, William Smith, and others. William Morgan was the first to die, and Charles Kinchin next. Others achieved great distinction in Christian labor, while a few went back to the world and sin. Those who proved faithful were ridiculed as "Bible bigots," "Bible moths," and the like, but they chose rather to suffer affliction as the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. When their enemies found that persecution did not avail to check the movement, a conspiracy was formed to "blow up the Godly Club," but it seems to have come to naught. They were lied about, and slandered in print, until at length a defense seemed necessary, and after consulting with Rev. Samuel Wesley, John's father, an epistle of defense appeared, "the first defense of Methodism ever published," in which was shown that "the three points to which these gentlemen think themselves obliged to adhere were: 1. That of visiting and relieving the prisoners and the sick, and giving away Bibles,

prayer books, and other religious works; and of explaining the catechism to the children of poor families, and of dropping a shilling or so to such families where they deem it needful. 2. That of weekly communion. 3. That of observing strictly the fasts of the Church, which has caused some to call them supererogation men."

But their work among prisoners was not one of "supererogation." John Wesley once preached the condemned criminals' sermon in Newgate. Forty-seven were under sentence of death. As they came marching in the clanking of their chains was awful. Wesley preached on the joy in heaven over repenting sinners. The power of God was felt. Most of the prisoners were in tears. A few days after twenty of them were executed at once, five of whom died in peace. This was only one instance in hundreds in which these young Methodists obeyed the command of their Master. They were bent on saving others as well as themselves.

THE TRUTH DISCOVERED

Speaking of the rise of Methodism, Mr. Wesley himself says: "In 1729 my brother and I read the Bible; saw inward and outward holiness therein; followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 we saw, 'This holiness comes by faith.' In 1738 we saw, 'We must be justified before we are sanctified.' But still holiness was our point—inward and outward holiness. God then thrust us out, utterly against our will, to raise up a holy people. When Satan could not otherwise prevent this he threw Calvinism in our way; and then Antinomianism, which struck at the root both of inward and outward holiness."

A great deal is involved in the above statement, but the exact date of the origin of Methodism is not revealed. Mr. Wesley does not say that he and his brother *first* read the Bible in 1729, but that in that year they made an important discovery, eight years afterward another important discovery, and the

next year another. "Then," he says, "God thrust us out." Then Satan threw obstacles in their way, and the struggle began. But when did Methodism originate? Was it in the conflict with Satan? Was it in the incitement of others to holiness? Was it in the discovery that justification precedes sanctification, or that holiness is by faith, or that holiness is taught in the Bible? Or was it in holiness itself? or in Bible study itself? Or, did it precede all this and take its rise in the diligent instructions of a pious mother who consecrated her infant children to God and taught them to study the Bible and love the Lord in an age when infidelity was rife and when irreligion was the order of the day? Certain it is, as Abel Stevens observes, that "Susanna Wesley is universally credited by Methodist writers as the real foundress of this mighty success. She planted its germ at Epworth; she kept it alive by her vigilant nurture when it was transplanted to Oxford; she guarded and nurtured it into mature

strength in London." This being so, the exact date of the development of this "germ" is made all the more uncertain. History shows that the Wesley boys, in 1729, when "reading their Bibles," had not yet come into the enjoyment of experimental religion, far less into the experience of holiness. Their religious state was the object of deep solicitude in the heart of their devoted and godly mother. They were "following after," exhorting others to join them, opening up the way of truth, but had not yet attained. Is Methodism simply a truth? Is it an incitement to holiness? Is it a fight with error? Is it a series of discoveries in the deep things of God? Is it an impulsive force which thrusts men out, utterly against their will, to raise up a devout people? Upon the answer to these questions depends knowledge of the origin of Methodism.

THE SCENE LAID

Look at the facts. The land and century in which this movement originated had their

peculiar relations and opportunities. England was a central little island with extensive commerce, unbounded ambitions, vast resources, a migratory population, and related by political ties to extensive dominions both in the old and new worlds. The eighteenth century was likewise a sort of turning point in history, a period when the old was being rung out and the new being ushered in. The great work of preparation had been accomplished. The geographical discoveries begun by Columbus were about to be completed by Captain Cook, bringing unknown regions of vast extent into view for the dominion of Christ. The Reformers and martyrs had broken the iron yoke of popery, had exhumed the precious treasure of sacred truth from beneath a putrid heap of superstitions, and had given back the Bible to the world. The Nonconformists had secured religious liberty, and had built up a literature in defense of Christian truth. All that was needed now was a deep and widespread revival of spiritual

religion, rebuking lukewarm Christians, convicting shameless sinners, and condemning foolish error and reckless wickedness wherever found. That revival came in Methodism. The fifteen young men in Oxford with their well-worn Bibles, calloused knees, holy aspirations, and baptized energies, cultivated, God-fearing, sin-hating, the fire of God pent up in their bones, new discoveries in vital truth within them and panting for unfolding, with God behind them thrusting them out, the world around them sneering at their methods, the devil before them casting obstacles in their path—these young men under God were the planters of a tree which had its roots in eternal truth, its body in omnipotent power, its branches in infinite grace, and its flower and fruit in love which passeth knowledge. Never since time began was there more earnest preaching, or more soulful singing, or more courageous defending of the faith, or more passionate appeals to the conscience, or more terrific proclaiming of the law, or more

brotherly solicitation into the way of life. And it was effective, too. The power of God came down upon the multitudes, while strong men fell to the ground and redeemed souls cried out for exceeding joy. That age and country had never known religion after such a fashion. The ease-cursed clergy frowned upon the movement and closed the churches against the new evangelists. "Church or no church," said Wesley, "we must save souls;" and on they went preaching in the highways, the market places, the graveyards, the open fields, the broad roads, by day and night, whenever and wherever they could find a wall or a box or a tombstone to stand upon, and room for the people to assemble and hear. There was intense excitement among the people, but perfect calmness and self-control among the preachers. The doctrines proclaimed, while as old as the Bible, were stripped of their accumulated rubbish and flashed like naked swords in the light of a holy presence, to penetrate through the gar-

ments of self-righteousness and find the hearts of a wicked people who had long defied God. The slain of the Lord were many. Victories without number were won. New captains were commissioned and "thrust out." Organization followed organization, until, almost before these God-led men had time to pause and consider, the fir tree and the pine and the box tree which God had set in the desert were grown to an immense height and had extended their branches into many lands, yielding rich fruit and casting grateful shade over peoples parched in the dry heat of sin and selfishness or withered in the consuming fires of a hell already begun on earth.

"Glory to God for this shelter of love!
'Tis planted by Him who is pleading above,
Who offers to sinners the wealth of his grace
And lifts them, restored, to the light of his face."

THE PRINCIPAL FOUNDER

A RELIGIOUS system partakes largely of the spirit of its founder. His ideas and sentiments, his teachings and life habits, his tact and humor, his power as a leader, and his bearing under trial become ensamples to the flock that rises to follow him, and through them are handed down to other generations.

In the early Methodist movement John Wesley was the controlling force. He directed its undertakings, appointed its agents, and guarded its interests. He stamped the impress of his thought upon its principles and formulas. He embodied its genius, illustrated its character, and gave bent to its energies.

From childhood he had manifested a religious spirit. His father was an educated minister. His mother was a minister's daugh-

ter. He was born and reared in an atmosphere of piety. At the age of eight he was admitted to the communion table, an uncommon thing for those days. All through his youth he evinced a remarkable knowledge of true religion.

At the age of twenty-two he was ordained a deacon, and at twenty-five an elder. At thirty-two he became a missionary to Georgia, laboring among the Indians and colonists. While here he formed the acquaintance of some Moravians, who questioned him closely touching his religious experience, and he became satisfied that he had not attained the vital experience of a real Christian. "I went to America," he afterward said, "to convert the Indians, but O! who shall convert me?" He returned to England, sought the blessing of assurance, found it, entered upon evangelistic work with new energy, and became in fact what he had always sighed to be, a Christian in heart and life. He worked incessantly, stirring up the energies of a dead

Church, rebuking the sophistries of a skeptical age, revolutionizing the practices of a wicked world, and reviving the essence of spiritual religion as no other man had done since the days of Paul.

Wesley was great in elements of personal efficiency, and he was also a born leader. He knew how to arouse latent talent into activity. He feared nobody. He trusted God. He lived in the smile of his Saviour. He had a fine intellect. His judgment was quick and sound. His reasoning was convincing. His preaching was plain and direct. His life was circumspect and devout. His observation was keen. He knew how to criticise effectively. He never inflicted unnecessary wounds. His counsels were words in due season. He studied character and knew the measure of each mind. He made young preachers feel that he was their best friend. He could devise original methods to suit emergencies, and could develop in strange situations an atmospheric condition that told the presence of

God. Everybody felt at home with him. The poorest of the poor were made to feel at ease. He was strict in religion, and required his followers to be faithful in worship.

When organizing the work in Georgia he required the children to be present in the Sunday classes unless they were sick. Poor clothing was not considered an excuse. Some of the boys had no shoes or stockings, and were made the butt of ridicule by others who had. Wesley heard of this, and his first impulse was to rebuke the rude tormentors in a public lecture. Then he thought he would insist that all children should come to the school barefoot. Finally he decided to set the pattern himself, and thus shame the offenders. Sure enough, the next Sunday he walked into the place of worship with clean bare feet, and in conducting the session he took occasion to refer to the human body as fearfully and wonderfully made, using his own foot, which he placed on a convenient chair, as an example in marvelous anatomy. The effect was

magical. No boy was thereafter ashamed of his naked feet.

HIS APPEARANCE

Close observers who knew Mr. Wesley personally describe him as low in stature, slender in body, muscular in frame, firm in step, fresh in complexion, cheerful in countenance, commanding in presence, sprightly in conversation, tranquil in repose, and somewhat reserved in bearing. His habits of constant exercise and strict temperance gave him the aspect of perfect health. In old age his face was fine and beautiful. His clear, smooth forehead, aquiline nose, bright and piercing eye, and grave but sweet countenance made him a striking and interesting figure.

He dressed neatly and simply, wore no silk or velvet, no knee buckles or other ornaments, had a narrow cravat, a coat with small upright collar, and, with his snowy hair and dignified, pleasant ways, gave an idea of something primitive and apostolic.

In mind and heart Wesley was always young. In the treatment of moral questions he was a century in advance of his age. His views of temperance, slavery, and kindred evils are quoted as alive unto this day.

He was a busy man. Though never in a hurry, he had no leisure. He would not converse with anybody for more than one hour at a time, deeming further talk unprofitable.

People beset him with all sorts of foolish suggestions. One woman told him that the Lord had sent her to rebuke him for living at ease and treasuring up money. "The Lord knows me better," said he, "and if he had sent you on such an errand he would have given you a more proper message." Instead of living at ease, Wesley was constantly burdened for the salvation of sinners and for the edification of saints. When not actually preaching the Gospel he was breathing after the Gospel spirit to go about continually doing good. His sighings and exultations show how, in his struggles with error and with evil, he

sought for better manifestations of life. "O what may not a single believer do," he cried, "who seeks nothing but the glory of God!" "O what shoals of half-awakened sinners," he cried again, "will be broad awake when it is too late!" And here are other of his deep breathings:

"O what a pity that so many even of the children of God do not know the day of their visitation!"

"O what light and comfort did I enjoy in my own soul, and what a taste of the pardoning love of God!"

"O how good it is to have no choice of our own, but to leave all things to the will of God!"

"O what a flame did God kindle! Many were on fire to be dissolved in love."

"O how patient, how meek, how gentle toward all men ought a preacher, especially a Methodist, to be!"

"O what zeal, what prudence and patience, are requisite to bear the manners of an unto-

ward people, and to train them up in Christian discipline, till they come to the full stature of Christ!"

"O what a meeting was our last class meeting! In three minutes, or less, God, quite unexpectedly, convinced an old opposer of the truth, and wounded many. I never felt the abiding presence of God so exceeding powerful before."

STRANGE EXPERIENCES

Extravagance in religious devotion was something that Mr. Wesley did not like, but could not always avoid. Sometimes the people were so lively that three or four, yea, ten or twelve, would be praying aloud together. Some of them would scream at the top of their voices. Some would use wild expressions in prayer. Some would drop as dead, and become "as stiff as a corpse;" then they would start up and cry, "Glory! glory!" perhaps twenty times together. These things

tended to bring the work into contempt, but whenever he reproved them it was in the most mild and gentle manner possible.

He met with many strange and laughable experiences, and in his Journal, which Mr. Birrell, a bright Englishman, has well called "the most amazing record of human exertion ever penned by man," he has recorded not a few. In telling of a disturbance at an outdoor preaching he says: "One called a gentleman came with his pockets filled with rotten eggs. A young man came unawares and clapped his hands on either pocket and broke the eggs so that the stench made him turn and flee." His criticisms of books and men were apt. Of the author of a volume he says, "A well-meaning man, but deeply ignorant of his subject." When a curate at St. Andrews read the lessons badly he remarks, "It would be better to pay the gentleman for doing nothing." Of the Glasgow people he slyly says, "They dearly love the Gospel *on the Sawbath day*."

Like all other mortals, he had his failings. He was too credulous, and he married unwisely. There was no honeymoon. Three days after his marriage, he wrote: "I met the single brethren of the society, and advised them to *remain single*," therein following the example of another great Englishman, Milton, who wrote his essay on divorce a few weeks after his wedding.

He had a weakness for doctoring himself, and he despised both doctors and their drugs. His own prescriptions, however, indicate that he knew less about medicine than about theology. For a swelling in the cheek he recommends boiled nettles and warm treacle—for outward application. In another place he says, "I applied pounded garlic to my feet, which took away my hoarseness."

A HUMOROUS VEIN

Tyerman asserts that Wesley was naturally of an irritable disposition, but, by the grace

of God, his thorough command of himself enabled him always to appear in good humor.

At one of the early Conferences a preacher was occupying too much time in narrating his religious experience, and Charles Wesley threatened to leave the room if John, who was presiding, did not stop the speaker. John's only reply was, "Reach him his hat." Charles did not go out.

On one occasion, when Methodism held many wealthy people in her communion, Wesley and one of his preachers sat down at a sumptuous repast at a rich man's table. "O, sir," cried the preacher, with more piety than politeness, "what a sumptuous dinner! Things are not now as they once were! No self-denial now amongst the Methodists!" Wesley silenced him by calmly saying, "My brother, there is a fine opportunity for self-denial now."

Once while passing Billingsgate market he and a friend saw two women quarreling most furiously. Wesley paused to listen. His

friend said: "Pray, sir, let us go! I cannot stand it." "Stay, Sammy," answered Wesley, as he looked at the earnest viragoes, "stay and learn how to preach."

Such traits of character were well adapted to Mr. Wesley's position as ruler of the societies. He could become all things to all men if by any means he might save some. His genial spirit, ready wit, quick judgment, and great courage enabled him to pass many a perilous point in safety, and helped to perpetuate his efficiency to the end of his career.

He worked to the last, traveling five thousand miles a year, and never reaching a second childhood. One year before his death, at the age of nearly eighty-eight, he preached a mighty sermon to two thousand people, and he preached his last sermon only ten days before he died. He was in the ministry sixty-five years, and gathered around him three hundred itinerant preachers, one thousand local preachers, and eighty thousand members. He founded eight mission stations in the

West Indies, eight in British America, and founded the Methodist Episcopal Church, with fourteen Annual Conferences, two hundred and fifty-nine preachers, and sixty-three thousand members. During his life he preached forty thousand sermons, and wrote, revised, or compiled three hundred books in science, literature, and theology.

He died as he had lived, poor. He requested in his will that "six poor men should carry his corpse to the grave." He allowed for no hearse, no coach, no pomp, no demonstration. He was buried by torchlight just before daylight to "avoid a tumult." He was born June 17, 1703, and died March 2, 1791.

Wesley was a man, simply a man, earnest, honest, humble, persistent, consecrated to God, contented to do one work, determined to fulfill his mission whatever might come, and abundantly illustrating the old axiom, "Preaching which comes from the soul is sure to work most on the soul."

THE SUBSTANCE OF METHODISM

A VERY natural inquiry with reference to an interesting subject is, What is there of it? What is its nature, its essence, its character?

Especially is this true of Methodism. Learned men have sought to penetrate its depths and expose the secret of its strength.

Perhaps no one has come nearer to an unfolding of the real gist of the subject than Dr. Isaac Taylor, the philosophical recluse of the Established Church in England. He declared that the Methodistic proclamation of the Gospel was rendered effective by a Divine Energy, granted at that time, in a sovereign manner, and in an unwonted degree; and that the impression which the Methodistic preaching produced resolved itself into four elements, namely:

1. A waking up of that deep-seated soul-sense which has its home in the structure of human nature and which differentiates man from other portions of the creature world. Under Wesleyan preaching this religious sense asserted its being in a peculiar manner. There was tumult in the soul while a power irresistible was claiming its rights over both soul and body. Every hearer felt himself utterly alone for the time being even though surrounded by a crowd. Even the preacher himself was almost forgotten while the immortal and guilty spirit was brought into the presence of eternal justice. It seemed as if the whole moral condition of the dismayed heart were for the first time thoroughly spread open for impartial scrutiny. Levity ceased, lightness vanished, indifference fled away, and mockery was hushed while the mind and heart of the trembling sinner seemed irresistibly laid bare in the presence of the supreme rectitude. The dormant religious consciousness, or innate sense of relationship to God, was

aroused in various degrees of intensity, but so effectually in most cases as to give it an entire newness of manifestation like as of a fresh and unheard-of thing in the world.

2. As this spiritual quickening proceeds in the soul a deeper feeling also intervenes, a consciousness of the relationship of God, the Father of Spirits, to the individual spirit, which is thus beginning to live a life divine. Our Lord Jesus Christ was manifested in the flesh that he might "show us the Father." He told his disciples that he was in the Father, and the Father in him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This doctrine was what gave to primitive Christianity its tremendous force, its vital warmth, and its marvelous animation, and it was a renovation of this doctrine that made Methodism such a remarkable season of religious refreshment. Every sinner was brought most vividly to see the Saviour beckoning him toward God and to hear him calling upon him to repent and believe the Gospel. It was almost as if Jesus

had come again in the flesh, as he really had in the Spirit, to startle men into a consciousness of new life and duty after slumbering through the long and dreary night of the dark ages.

3. While Methodism was producing this powerful agitation of soul, and setting before the consciousness of humanity the imminent presence of God as a Father and rightful Sovereign of the heart, it brought also into conspicuous prominence the thrilling truth of a gracious Saviour come into the world especially for man's deliverance. Pardon was proclaimed for repented sin. Salvation was set forth for appropriating faith. Adoption was presented for the trustful cry of "Abba, Father!" Regeneration was offered for accepting confidence. Full deliverance was declared to be available to all mankind who would comply with the Gospel conditions. It was New Testament theology set on fire of spirit life and held flaming with light and warmth before the vision of despairing souls.

"Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Our Lord's discourses and the Pauline epistles were laid under special tribute for the enrichment and irradiation of the preaching which made this Gospel truth so comprehensive in its "swing of conquest."

4. Having stirred the immortal spirit to a sense of accountability to God and to an acceptance of the Bible plan of salvation, Methodism next proceeded to the lively development of that evangelic philanthropy which Jesus and Paul so plainly taught but which had been forgotten or tainted through the contact of Christianity with paganism and its degeneration under the corrupting influences and tendencies of Romanism. "Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand, Inasmuch as ye did it unto these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given or-

der to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Methodists were instantly thrown into the habit of giving liberally and systematically for the benefit of the poor and perishing. The bodies as well as the souls of men were to be cared for in her economy. "A penny a week and a shilling a quarter" became the minimum standard of giving. The regular rule for the government of all members was, "First, get all you can by honest industry; second, save all you can by prudent economy; and, third, give all you can with Christian liberality." In order to set wholesome examples in beneficence, the leaders denied themselves all luxuries, and even dispensed with many necessities. Wesley expended his own income in deeds of charity. The tax commission once got after him to make returns of silver plate or something else to be taxed, but his laconic reply was, "I have two spoons, one at Bristol and the other at London; and I cannot afford to have any other

plate, while so many poor are around me crying for bread.”

5. In order to facilitate and perfect the plans for the sustenance of the poor, and for the rescue of the perishing, there was instituted that effective system of Christian fellowship and mutual watchcare which became so distinguishing a feature in the economy of Methodism—the class meeting. It was the business of the leader to meet the members weekly, to inquire after their souls, to advise with them, comfort, exhort, or reprove them, as occasion might require, and to receive their contributions for the relief of the preachers, church, and poor. This institution instantly became an immense agency for good. President Green affirms that “it was the strongest bond of union in Methodism; its most effective means of spiritual improvement and culture; its most successful method of bringing the church members into close intercourse on spiritual things; and its most effectual way of guarding each individual believer, and of

securing mutual help, consideration, and care. It afforded the opportunity for true spiritual oversight, and an actual brotherly communion. While it declared the common interests of all, it took careful cognizance of each. Every sheep in the flock was known and named and numbered; every one was watched over and accounted for; no one was too mean to be recorded.”*

But perhaps the most marked element in the abiding essence of Methodism was the elevation which it gave to the standard of Christian life and character. In the popular theology and worship of the time there was almost nothing which served to gratify the heart life. A cold and stately ritualism was made to answer the deep hunger of the soul after the hidden manna of God’s eternal truth and righteousness. The religious doctrines and services which Jesus instituted and Paul unfolded had become utterly lost to life and thought. The heart of flesh for the heart of

* *Mission of Methodism*, page 52.

stone, a deep regeneration, growth in grace, an eradication by faith of the roots of depravity, a refreshing of the soul by the constant ministrations of the divine Spirit, a going on to perfection with all that this "central idea of Christianity" involved—all this had become a lost benefaction, a forgotten heritage. Methodism revived these things and did it in such a spirit and under such conditions that they became attractive to all earnest souls, and repellent to none. They were offered as the normal privileges and rights of free men in Christ, not as the slavish duties and burdens of a legal yoke. Indeed, liberty of conscience and freedom of spirit were conspicuously promulgated along with holiness of heart and life as constituting the very essence of Methodism.

If ever any man loved religious liberty it was John Wesley. He had tasted by bitter experience the fruits of bigotry and intolerance, and had been delivered from bonds only by a most remarkable providence. Having

been made free himself, it became the passion of his life forever to secure freedom to all his followers and to instill into their minds ideas of liberty in doctrine, polity, and modes of worship. The motto that always governed him, in this respect, was this: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." He wanted nothing in his principles, creed, or opinions which would not bear the strictest examination and the severest test of truth.

"He was a Puritan, in every sense of the word, without Puritanic exclusiveness; and no man ever lived who held the rights of conscience in a more sacred regard. To enjoy the utmost spiritual religious freedom himself, and to perpetuate it in the Methodist community throughout the old and new world, was the great end and aim of his life."*

It will thus be seen that Methodism as it first took hold of the world was not so much an issuance of new dogmas, beliefs, and

* *Genius and Mission of Methodism*, by W. P. Strickland, page 29.

methods, as it was a revivifying and reapplying of the elementary truths, or rather facts, which constitute, in substance, the Christian religion. It was a soul-stirring consciousness of Christian verities. It was the power by which New Testament truth and life and grace were made new manna for hungry souls. It was, in a word, the new advent of all that made Christianity effective at the time that Stephen suffered martyrdom and Saul of Tarsus was transformed from the character of a persecutor to that of a preacher of righteousness and the greatest missionary this world has ever known. Could Paul issue the challenge, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to youward is not weak, but is mighty in you," so could Wesley. Christ spoke in him, and through him, making his ministry the mighty power of God unto all that believed.

Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," and the spiritual life of these words through the

preaching of Wesley, under the baptism of the Holy Ghost, took on its primitive freshness, brightness, and power. The power of every Church is its hold on the Holy Ghost. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The word "revival" is, therefore, the true one to apply to Methodism. It revived the Protestant Churches of all lands. It revived the spiritual life of all peoples. It did not create new life, but revived the old. "There is nothing new in it, save as a fresh development of that which is old may be called new. The doctrines are old; the disciplinary principles are old; the spirit of activity is old; the methods of evangelism are old; the forms of beneficence are old; the aims and purposes are old—all is old. But as the breath of spring causes old roots to burst forth to new and vigorous life, so the spirit which breathed through Methodism—an old spirit withal—caused that great revival of the eighteenth century, from which dates a new era in the spiritual history of mankind."

THE GENIUS OF METHODISM

THE genius of a person is that peculiar mental structure or aptitude which especially qualifies for certain lines of action, or success in a given pursuit. It reaches its ends by a kind of intuitive power, and thus differs from ordinary talent or ability which is amenable to training and more or less dependent upon instruction.

Wesley tells of a lifelong friend of his, a Dr. S——, who was the greatest genius in little things he had ever known. He had invented his own fire screen, his lamps, his ink-horn, his very save-all, and "I really believe," said Wesley, "that were he seriously to set about it, he could invent the best mouse trap that ever was in the world."

PERSONS OF GENIUS

Wesley himself had a genius, not for the invention of mouse traps, but for the perfecting of devices for saving men. His power for the discernment of spiritual truth, the concentration of religious forces, the application of sound doctrinal principles, the development of effective working plans, and for the quick organization of those whom he rallied to his support was well-nigh intuitive.

His brother Charles had a genius for the composition of sacred songs and hymns, putting into them more wealth of thought, depth of discernment, clearness of exposition, and felicity of expression than any other bard of history.

And no wonder, for their mother had a genius for the culture of childhood, the training of youth, and for directing the energies and controlling the impulses of her sons.

George Whitefield had a genius for impassioned oratory and for seizing upon an

opportune occasion for preaching. His flame-like appeals for sinners to repent seemed to come from a divinity within him that made every word and motion a direct message from God to men.

Fletcher of Madeley, "the designated successor of Wesley," had a genius for fervent piety, perfect charity, effective controversy, and seraphic ministry.

Dr. Coke had a genius for voluminous writing, extensive travel, fervent preaching, and thorough planting of the germs of Methodism. His soul was all on fire for missions. He sighed for the wings of an angel and the voice of a trumpet that he might proclaim the Gospel through the East and West, the North and South.

Francis Asbury had a genius for quick adaptation to his surroundings, masterly grasp of a situation, firm execution of plans, and tireless application of his energies, literally wearing himself out in the service of his Lord.

All the early itinerants had a genius for self-sacrifice, entire consecration, and unyielding devotion to the propagation of Methodism. As early as 1769 they bound themselves by a solemn compact to do the following three things: "1. To devote ourselves entirely to God; denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily; steadily aiming at one thing, to save our own souls and them that hear us. 2. To preach the old Methodist doctrines, and no other. 3. To observe and enforce the whole Methodist discipline."

This peculiar pledge made these peculiar geniuses a peculiar power, and gave them peculiar success in their chosen line of action. Their movement took on the characteristics of its own genius, and the endowment of its own animating spirit. It was ever impelled forward by its own inherent forces, and seemed to move intuitively into its own favorite conditions of life and forms of effort. It came to have a genius not only for the invention of little things in Church polity

and administration, but for the discovery of great things in experience and achievement.

A GREAT DISCOVERY

It can be said of Methodism that very early in her career she uncovered and brought into new prominence the greatest truth that ever dawned upon Christian intelligence, namely:

1. That the living God comes in direct contact with the consciousness of believing man.

2. That salvation is a conscious experience resulting from godly sorrow and saving faith, and that it may be full in this life.

This discovery, while not new in the history of the Church, was new to that period of Church life; and the manner in which Methodism grasped this truth, gave it emphasis, practically illustrated it, and made it plain to mystified minds, was abundant proof that a new religious genius had appeared in the world.

Consider the historic facts. From time im-

memorial the world had been feeling after God. The old philosophical systems were nothing more than an expansion of man's in-born desire to come in contact with the infinite. The noblest monument intellectual culture had ever reared was the Athenian altar with its unsatisfactory inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." The most intense cry the human heart had ever uttered was, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Christianity was sent into the world to reveal the meaning of that altar inscription and to still the cry of that agonized heart. "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." The apostles and the primitive Christians had a blessed knowledge of this distinguishing feature of the Christian faith. They saw and proclaimed the truth that Christianity differs from all other religions in bringing to men a knowledge of God and in bringing to God the homage of men. "Other religions are seeking God; the Christian religion is seeking man."

Christianity had entered upon its marvel-

ous career by making this central truth its foremost maxim. "In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was God." "All things were made by him." "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." "There was a man sent from God . . . to bear witness of the Light." "That was the true Light. . . . And as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 1-13).

In this brief record is contained the whole essence of the Christian scheme. The apostle John understood it, so did Luke and so did Paul. In its first contact with paganism Christianity demonstrated the truth that "God" was in it. His "life" was manifest. His "light" shone over its conflicts. The "darkness" fled away. The men of God bore

witness of the light, and God gave them the assurance of acceptance and the power of triumph amid the terrors of persecution and the agonies of martyrdom.

Then came the corrupting influences of the early centuries and the midnight of the dark ages, obscuring the "light" of the Gospel dawn and shutting away from human experience the gracious power of sonship. Christ was no longer preached as the direct source of life and light, and the necessity of regeneration became a forgotten truth. The doctrinal reformation under Luther paved the way for the spiritual reformation which followed under Wesley. God returned again to his people, the light shone into their minds, the life glowed in their souls, and they were born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

THE SECRET UNFOLDED

No intelligent person can study the career of Wesley without knowing that he had re-

discovered the secret of the long-lost life and power. His writings abound with testimonies to the truth that true religion is God revealed to man, God seeking man, God in man, and God working through man. Take a few expressions:

“O what a dull thing is life without religion! I do not wonder that time hangs heavily upon the hands of all who know not God.” “What a blessed thing it is to be with those who are alive to God!” “I desire nothing but Christ; and I have Christ always reigning in my heart. I want nothing; he is my sufficient portion in time and in eternity.” “God has given me all I want; I am as happy as I can live!” “Hundreds of us met at the room and solemnly renewed our covenant with God.” “I scarcely ever saw the people here so much alive to God.” “I soon forgot my weariness; God was there, and it was enough.” “O what day of God’s power was this!” “More of the real power of God attends the uncouth expressions of some of our

weak people than attends the studied discourses of stronger minds." "I have many times known God to attach his power to the words of extremely weak men." "I came to Utey, and found E—— R—— just alive, but all alive to God." "I returned to London and saw Dr. Dodd for the last time. He had entirely and calmly given himself up to the will of God. None could converse with him without acknowledging that God is with him."

Such testimonies could be multiplied indefinitely. The writings of all the saints and worthies of the Methodist movement abound with declarations of God imminent in the life of man, directing his movements, inspiring his thoughts and words, and using him constantly in worship and service.

The distinctive feature of the Methodist creed—that which differentiates it from other evangelical formulas—may be stated briefly as this:

God's Spirit is in the believer, witnessing to his adoption, cleansing his heart from sin,

filling his soul with light and knowledge, renewing him in the life of holiness, and preparing him to say when his work is done, "The best of all is, God is with us."

This is the genius of Methodism, the animating spirit which brings God and man together, reconciled, and united as coworkers in saving lost souls.

BACKBONE OF THE SYSTEM

As originally defined, a Methodist society is "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

It was further declared that "there is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies—'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.' But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits."

Around these original definitions noble truths and sentiments crystallized as rapidly as actual experience and practical work could develop them.

Mr. Wesley formally stated some of these sentiments, and others came to light in the Annual Conference deliberations. Here are a few:

I. PRINCIPLES

1. Justification is by faith alone, and until a man experiences this grace he has no power to do any work pleasing to God.

2. Three things go together in justification: (1) God's mercy and grace. (2) Christ's satisfaction of the divine justice. (3) Man's true and living faith.

3. Repentance, hope, and love are joined with faith in the justified soul.

4. The doctrine of justification by faith is to be taught with the complementary doctrine of good works.

5. Good works are expected to follow justification as the fruit and proof of it. Faith without works is dead.

6. No willful sin is consistent with justify-

ing faith. If a believer sin willfully he casts away his confidence in the Lord.

7. Obedience from a loving heart is always to follow saving faith. We do not make void the law through faith, but establish it.

8. A Christian must respond to the claims of truth, right, and conviction, even at the sacrifice of personal friendships and private benefits.

9. Forasmuch as "a measure of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," every disobedient soul stands condemned.

10. It is meet, right, and the bounden duty of a Christian to declare unto all men, wherever in the world he may find them, the glad tidings of salvation.

11. It is the duty of every believer to use his talent, his gift, for the good of the whole Church; his privilege to receive from the Church personal and constant oversight; and it is a mutual duty to maintain discipline and promote effective service.

12. Whatever Methodism is adapted to do

at any period of her history, that is her mission and calling to do.

13. It is the standing duty of Methodism to adapt herself more and more to all conditions of society, and to minister effectively to all accessible needs.

14. If the whole work of Methodism is to be regarded as a direct divine interposition, then the calling and qualification of each of her servants must be considered as "of God."

15. While believers have the right of private judgment, because they are responsible to God, nevertheless they should obey the rulers and governors of the Church so far as is consistent with their duty to God; when they cannot, they will quietly obey God rather than man.

16. Religion is not designed to displace reason, judgment, the moral sense, or common sense, but in harmony with these to fit the heart for God's indwelling.

17. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in the regeneration and sancti-

fication of men; therefore, we give to the Spirit due prominence in our doctrines and worship.

18. The Bible is the only infallible guide to faith and practice; therefore any supposed leading of the Spirit which collides with revelation is of necessity spurious.

19. Conversion to God is an instantaneous work. The moment a man exercises living faith in Christ he is justified.

20. Knowledge of this great spiritual change necessarily goes with it. No man can have this justifying faith without knowing that he has it, because this faith brings peace, and peace is a conscious experience.

21. A man is justified at the same time that he is born of God. Conversion involves three things: pardon of past sins, regeneration from present guilt, and adoption into the family of God.

22. He that is born of God doth not commit sin, and this deliverance from sin is a conscious experience.

23. Salvation implies ultimate holiness of heart and life springing from a true and living faith.

24. The working out of salvation is simply "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord," bearing fruit unto God, and continuing faithful in duty and responsibility unto death.

25. "Going on to perfection" is the normal course of a saved heart which is aflame with the love of God; it is showing forth God's praise by thought, word, deed, bearing, and example.

In the successful application of these principles to the individual life, and to the varied relations and responsibilities of the societies, the backbone of Methodist character appears. Man's power alone is not sufficient for these things. God must work in man and through man to accomplish such results. His power is therefore manifest in the Methodist character. Take this away, and the distinctive force is gone. Let it decline, and every peculiar function of Methodism will wither. Let it be lost, and our very name will perish.

II. RULES

Along with these principles certain rules were found serviceable, and these, under the title of "General Rules," have become a fixed quantity in Methodism; that is, they are a part of the organic law and cannot be changed except by constitutional process. They date from the year 1739.

Given in condensed form, perhaps the most essential are the following:

1. Avoid all evil, notably profanity, Sabbath-breaking, slaveholding, drunkenness, fighting, quarreling, evil-speaking, smuggling, usury, cheating, and unprofitable conversation.

2. Keep the golden rule: Do to others as you would have them do to you.

3. Abstain from what you know is not for the glory of God, such as putting on gold and costly apparel, taking diversions that cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus, singing songs or reading books detrimental to real

piety, softness and needless self-indulgence, hoarding, and reckless borrowing or buying.

4. Do good. Be merciful. Help others. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Visit the sick. Remember those in prison.

5. Look after the souls of men. Reprove and exhort. Urge yourself into religious work.

6. Be especially mindful of each other. Employ those of the household of faith in preference to others. Buy one of another. Aid each other in business.

7. Deny yourself. Take up the cross. Be patient. Run the Christian race. Bear reproach for Christ.

8. Attend church. Take the sacrament. Have a family altar. Pray in secret. Search the Scriptures. Observe fasting.

9. Admonish those who do not keep these rules. Bear with them for a season. If they repent not, separate yourself from them.

Besides the General rules, there are many special maxims which have an important bearing upon deportment. Here are several:

III. ADVICES

1. Be temperate in all things; a total abstainer.
2. Abstain from hurtful foods.
3. Let alcoholic beverages alone.
4. Keep out of the liquor traffic.
5. Cooperate in prohibition measures.
6. Dress plainly and becomingly.
7. Discourage marriage with unawakened persons.
8. Recognize no divorce except for adultery.
9. Guard the doors of the Church against unawakened persons.
10. Acquaint probationers with our doctrines, rules, and regulations.
11. Watch over each other in love.
12. Help each other to work out salvation.
13. Search carefully into the character and spirit of those who think themselves called to preach.
14. Admonish erring souls; bear with them for a season; expel them if you must.

15. Build plain churches; make hearers welcome; avoid unnecessary expenses.

16. Provide for higher education and the Christian training of the young.

17. Take care of missions, home and foreign, and utilize every means for the salvation of the world.

18. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that you may be healed.

19. Keep in close union. Guard against the tempter. Build up each other in the faith. Provoke one another to good works.

20. Be plain and open in dealing with souls. Be mild, tender, patient. Be honest, sincere, and thorough.

Surely a character controlled by such precepts and swayed by such influences bears the impress of a divine molding, and proves that the infinite potter has marvelous power over redeemed clay.

IV. MARKS

The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are:

1. Not mere opinions. As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think.

2. Not words or phrases of any sort. We have no pet Scripture passages not quaint modes of expression.

3. Not peculiar customs, usages, or actions of an indifferent nature. No form of apparel, or fashion of headdress, or posture of body, or habit of eating and drinking determines the character of a Methodist.

4. Not making any part of religion seemingly the whole of it. We do not make the whole of religion to mean doing no harm, or in doing good, or even in becoming pure. These are implied, however.

5. A Methodist is known by loving God with all his heart, and by giving proof that God's love is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him.

6. He is happy in God. He "rejoices in the Lord always." He has the witness in himself that he is born of God,

7. Having the Christian's hope, he gives thanks in everything. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning him.

8. He "prays without ceasing." It is given him "always to pray, and not to faint." He is present whenever practicable in the house of prayer. In retirement, in company, in business, or in social life his heart is ever with the Lord.

9. He loves his neighbor as himself. He hates no one. He does good to all. He prays for those who spitefully use him.

10. He is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to him. He loves not the world, neither the things which are in the world. He uses the world as not abusing it.

11. He has a single eye. The loving eye of his soul is fixed upon God. It is the supreme purpose of his life to accomplish the will of God.

12. As the tree is known by its fruits, so he keeps the commandments of God. He seeks to have a conscience void of offense.

What God has forbidden he avoids; what God has commanded he performs.

13. He watches out against wrongdoing. He seeks to shun the very appearance of evil. It grieves him to bring reproach upon God's cause.

14. He disregards worldly fashions and follies. His heart is in higher and better things. He makes no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

15. He does good unto all men, neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies, in every way and degree within his power. Having the mind that was in Christ, he strives to walk as he walked.

V. DOCTRINES

The name of religion implies a body of doctrine as well as a system of worship. No man can be religious without believing something. Infidelity is negative, but religion is positive. Unbelief may do nothing, but faith must do something. Hence St. James considers it safe to judge a man's faith by his works. No

works, no faith. Where faith is, works will appear.

Religion cannot subsist without a foundation in essential truth. An outward creed may not always be necessary, but the original facts of religion, the fundamental truths which bear upon the inner life of the soul, must be put in shape for consideration and acceptance. A creed is the open statement of those doctrines and truths which lie near the heart of the believer. It is a means to an end, not an end for the means. It is for the truth, not the truth for it. It is an exponent of the Christ life, not the life itself. It is a declaration of the Gospel, but not the essence of it. We *should* adhere to important truth as embodied in our formulas, but we *must* adhere to the vital life and essential principles of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Of Methodists we can say that, while they are liberal, they do believe something. They put away bigotry, but not the "form of sound words." They allow much latitude for opin-

ion, but hold to biblical standards of doctrine. They cannot help it.

Mr. Wesley was a great doctrinal preacher. His sermons teem with exposition of Bible theology. He did not harp upon threadbare dogmas, but he did seize upon the strings of truth which put the soul in tune. He did not glory in the exhibition of skeleton creeds, white and worn and dead, but he did cling ardently to vital beliefs, nourishing them, keeping them alive and "well covered with the muscle and fiber and cuticle and beauty of a holy, benignant, loving, working Christian life." He believed that a Church "must have the elasticity of youth in her step, the fullness of maturity in her form, the grace of liberty in her motion, the blush of the morning on her cheek, the light of eternity in her eye, and the glory of heaven on her head. She must be like the bow of the archer, an embodiment of beauty and strength. She must be centered about some great dominating conviction. This means a creed."

Methodism is set for the capture of this world for Christ. She proposes to move upon the enemy's works, and cannot, therefore, afford to load herself down too heavily with dogmatic munitions. A short creed and a simple one is her motto. She has it arranged so that any godly person may subscribe to her articles, and then go to work for Christ. If afterward the person feels an interest in theological research he can find abundant material for it in the standards of doctrine.

Methodism acts upon the conviction that man is free, a monarch doing as he will in the earthly life. She knows that he cannot be suborned by any power in earth or heaven or hell. Man is what he makes himself by the grace of God. If he sins he thereby demonstrates his power to resist the will of God and defy the penalties. If he accepts salvation, he thereby demonstrates his power to break through all opposing forces and become a "free man in Christ."

Methodism has therefore always been in deep earnest with man. She respects him, loves his soul, uses him well, tries to reason with him, preaches a plain Gospel, is plain herself, discards ceremonies, gowns, wigs, lays no stress on nonessentials, but insists strongly on surrender to God, submission to his will, and purification by the truth.

Methodism believes in the universality of the atonement. With the utmost consistency she can stand in the door of the world's hospital and cry, "There is none so sick that they must die." "By the grace of God, Jesus Christ tasted death for every man." "She does not regard God as austere and implacable—electing some to be saved and others to be lost—but as a Being of love, justice, and mercy, who elects all to be saved on the amicable terms of the Gospel." She does not look upon those who have complied with the Gospel requirements as one whit better by nature, or by the decree of God, than those who are still procrastinating, but with tearful

eyes urges all to come into communion with those who have obtained like precious faith. She believes that the Gospel saves, saves now, saves fully, and she does sharply distinguish between those who accept and those who reject it. "Only see," said John Wesley, "that your heart be right toward God; that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as the Master walked, and I ask no more."

To all earnest seekers and to all regenerated souls Methodism extends a hand of welcome as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Her communion is open, and she invites to her table all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

In common with all evangelical Christians, Methodists hold to such fundamental truths as the immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the dead; the final judgment; a state of eternal rest for the righteous, and a condition of endless punishment for incorri-

gible sinners. They hold to these doctrines strenuously.

A celebrated infidel, being asked how he accounted for the success of Methodism, thought seriously for a moment and then said: "Methodists believe in a heaven for the good, and a hell for the bad, and they are not ashamed to preach it. They believe in a God who is willing to boost if the sinner is willing to climb." There is much truth in this homely conception of our rudimental theology. We do proclaim divine mercy for the returning sinner, and infinite helpfulness to enable him to overcome his evil propensities.

Methodism also holds to a belief in the Trinity, to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, to the corruption of man's nature by sin, to the necessity of divine grace working with the human will to produce saving faith and fruitful works, to the impossibility of merit attaching to good works, to baptism and the Lord's Supper as the only sacraments, to the oblation of Christ on the cross as the only

and sufficient sacrifice for sin, to the duty of all Christians to be good citizens of the government under which they live, and to the right of Christians in common with all other citizens to their own political prerogatives and property rights.

THE MOVING FORCE

A DIVINE movement requires effective human agencies. In 1780 the Methodist preachers inquired among themselves, "In what view are we and our helpers to be considered?" and the answer was, "Perhaps as special messengers designed, 1. To provoke the regular ministers to jealousy; 2. To supply their lack of service toward those who are perishing for lack of knowledge."

Another question which had been raised in 1763 was, "What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the preachers called Methodists?" The reply was, "To reform the nation, and, in particular, the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

Here we have the keynote to Methodist endeavor—reformation of life and purification

of character. All the powers of the mind and forces of the soul were to be brought into exercise for the accomplishment of this extraordinary mission. All who approved of this plan and consecrated themselves to this work were hailed as "fellow-laborers." One personal principle, and one only, bound them in their activities, namely, "A desire to be a Christian; and a conviction that whatever I judge conducive thereto, that I am bound to do; wherever I judge I can best answer this end, thither it is my duty to go." Acting on this principle, both the preachers and the members engaged in their toils, their travels, their preaching and praying, exhorting and praising, evangelizing and organizing, trusting God, fearing no man, declaring truth, and attending to one thing, "going about continually doing good."

The preachers were men of one work, that of preaching the Gospel and caring for the souls of men. As helpful agencies, they employed lay talent, both of men and women,

and adopted every legitimate means within their power for the accomplishment of the great ends to which they had devoted all their talent and strength. Those ends were spiritual experience and Christian fellowship as the privilege and duty of all believers. And what a power for good these preachers, in their capacity as itinerants, became in the world! What a living, moving force were they against every form of evil!

Mr. Wesley had revived the scriptural plan of a traveling ministry, because he could not see how the divine command, "Go, preach," could be carried into effect without it. The apostles had traveled from place to place. So had Paul. So had Luther and his coadjutors. So had Wesley himself. At first he changed his preachers every six months, or every year at longest. The circuits were large, and the preachers could not complete their rounds oftener than once in four or six weeks. Yet each preacher had to move once a year. Wesley said: "We have found by long and con-

stant experience that a frequent exchange of teachers is best. This preacher has one talent, that another; no one whom I ever yet knew has all the talents which are needful for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in a whole congregation." To this opinion he adhered to the last. In 1788, when some one objected to the frequent changes he wrote: "For fifty years God has been pleased to bless the itinerant plan, the last year most of all. It must not be altered till I am removed, and I hope it will remain till our Lord comes to reign on earth."

In the course of time, however, in the American Church, the limit was extended to two years, then to three years, then to five years, and then to an indefinite period, but with annual appointments. This has been called the natural limit. It is the genius of Methodism to make everything as religiously natural and normal as possible.

A SPLENDID IDEAL

The theory of the itinerancy is to appoint every effective preacher to the work he is best qualified to serve, and to every church the pastor best adapted to supply its needs. That there are failures in the practical working of the system is no proof that the system itself is at fault. Perfection is not claimed for the itinerancy, and yet, were preachers and churches all in close sympathy with the provisions of discipline as they stand, and disposed to allow those provisions full swing in shaping their future appointments, the outcome possibly would be more satisfactory than it is, and an astonishment to those who fancy that a central authority is a hindrance rather than a help to the adjustment of pastoral relations.

There can be no question that the election of bishops, and the appointment of presiding elders to districts for support, tend to constitute a disinterested cabinet. These men have

no personal interest in the pulpits they are to man. Rivalries and jealousies are supposed to be to them unknown. They are officially interested in the welfare of all preachers and all charges alike. To favoritism and prejudiced local influences they are expected to be strangers. Were it possible to make the ideal equal the real, a Methodist cabinet would be about the most complete supervising power on earth.

Under the itinerant plan our Conference sessions have for presiding officers men of large experience, much wisdom and grace, gentle hearts and sympathetic natures. In the cabinet these presiding officers, or bishops, have as their counselors the presiding elders, who are in turn supposed to be "picked men," the noblest and best-equipped of our Conferences, brothers beloved, manly, candid, approachable, perfectly honest, and always decided. It is held that a hesitating, unstable, and unreliable preacher is incapacitated for the delicate work of the eldership. The work

is so essentially personal and conspicuous that every error or failure will prove a target for criticism and an element of friction and discontent.

THE ITINERANT'S STAFF

The itinerant preacher in his work has his staff of advisers and helpers. These are the class leaders and stewards of his charge. The first are subpastors. They are to supplement the work of the preacher by making a practical application of the sermon in the class room and the exhortation of the pulpit by private admonition. The pastor cannot always see all the sick, weak, and wayward of his flock. Often the leader can go in his stead. The pastor may not always know the spiritual condition of each member of his charge. It is the duty of the leader to meet them in special meeting, appointed for the purpose, to find out "how their souls prosper."

The stewards are a kind of bodyguard to the pastor. They are to care for him, soul and body, telling him what they see wrong in

his conduct and see that nothing be lacking in his temporal supplies. They are supposed to be "persons of solid piety, who know and love the doctrine and discipline" of the Church. As such they take an interest in Church work. They should be persons possessed with that charity which "covereth a multitude of sins," and liberal in order that they may "devise liberal things." Thus a pastor will not be embarrassed in his work on account of pecuniary circumstances, and will often be lifted to a higher moral and religious life by the godly admonition they give him.

While both these offices are closely identified with the pastorate, they have each a widely different relation to it. The former are appointed by the pastor and help to look after the flock, the latter by the church and help to look after the pastor.

SERIOUS VOWS

Itinerant Methodist preachers are called to the work under very strict rules, and are or-

dained under the most solemn vows. The Church grants them their first license to exhort and preach only after rigid examination as to their grace, gifts, and usefulness. Then the official boards recommend them to the Annual Conferences. After two years of travel and labor as students and pastors they are ordained deacons, and after two years more they are ordained elders.

Preachers are enjoined to be diligent, always employed, serious, prudent, discreet, frank, fair, humble, holy, and punctual. They are expected to lead souls to Christ, to take care of the societies, and to build up the people in holiness. They are to preach, visit, walk closely with God, watch carefully over each other, to be prayerful, studious, to watch against the world, deny themselves pleasures, and to be ashamed of nothing but sin. They are pledged to preach the truth, drive away error, promote peace, quietness, and love, and to be wholesome examples to the flock.

In such exacting and uncompromising ar-

rangements for securing the shepherding of the flocks, and the calling in of the wandering sheep, the genius of Methodism is conspicuously manifest. It demands safe folds, good shepherds, and well-disciplined sheep. It hears the cry of the perishing, and makes of every preacher, official member, and layman a rescue party. It relies on the great Shepherd to know his sheep, and through the blood of the everlasting covenant to make them perfect in every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight. It is, in a word, an agency by which God can, through wisdom and grace, accomplish the utmost possible for humanity now, henceforth, and for evermore.

THE GERM OF METHODIST LIFE

WHEN the doctrine that saving faith in Christ is given in a moment, and that a man may be turned instantly from sin and misery to righteousness and joy, was first brought to the attention of Mr. Wesley, who was then thirty-five years of age, he refused to accept the theory. His informant, however, Mr. Peter Böhler, referred him to the Scriptures and to vital Christian experience. Wesley searched the Scriptures and found very few other than instantaneous conversions. He then tested the doctrine by the experience of living witnesses and found it abundantly substantiated. He then declared: "Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief.' I was now thoroughly convinced; and by the grace of God I resolved to seek this

faith unto the end—(1) By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works of righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. (2) By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace continual prayer for this very thing—justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in him as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.”

THE GERM OF METHODISM

How Mr. Wesley found *his* Christ is a familiar but very important story. He had long hated and denounced sin. He had long loved and preached the way of salvation. Theoretically he was a Christian, but practically a stranger to grace. When he entered that “humble meeting in Aldersgate Street,” his soul was struggling for light and knowledge; when he left it his soul had entered into the

liberty of the children of God. The consciousness that God was reconciled, that he had really heard his pardoning voice, flooded his heart with sunshine and joy. "I felt that I did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." The above experience in the soul of John Wesley was really the germ of Methodism, the true source of Christianity in earnest, and it was a pivotal point in the religious history of England and of the world. All the great leaders of the Methodist movement—Charles Wesley, Whitefield, Fletcher, Coke, Lady Huntington, and many more, entered this same strait gate of a conscious change of heart as the primal source of personal religious experience, and they insisted upon it most strenuously as the essential beginning of every true Christian life. "No longer a servant, but a son," was a sort of a motto among this happy band, and there was not one of them

who could not testify in ringing tones from a clear experience that the new birth was as real an occurrence as the birth into earth life. John Nelson, who was converted under Wesley's preaching and who became his first native Methodist preacher in Yorkshire, made the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins the one theme of all his first attempts to preach; he told his eager hearers that this was "the old faith of the Gospel," and that as to a man's knowing his sins to be forgiven, he himself was "as sure that his own were forgiven as he could be of the shining of the sun."

The bearing of Wesley's conversion, and the conversion of all his coworkers, on the future of Methodism, and indeed on the future of world-wide Christian life, is too vast, too far-reaching and profound, to be known this side of eternity. To the founder of Methodism personally it represented the change which no human spirit could forego and still expect to enter heaven. On the forefront of his teach-

ing he now emblazoned the divine mandate, "Ye must be born again. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This authoritative declaration he ever laid down with all the energy of his redeemed powers. He had tested its truth by a personal experience, and could say:

"What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell."

This is what Rev. Richard Green calls "the central germ of Methodism. It is its inner core; the secret spring of its activity, its vital essence, its very life. It is its first essential characteristic."*

WONDROUS POWER

Illustrations of the power of God to convert the soul, and to do it in a moment, are numerous in Mr. Wesley's writings. The worst of men and women were saved. Scores

* *The Mission of Methodism*, page 16.

and hundreds of sinners were rescued at a time. In some instances, raging mad men were overwhelmed with conviction, subdued in spirit, and brought into peace. One woman, Ann Hooley, who had declared that "the Methodist God shall never be my God; I will sooner go to hell than to go to heaven in their way," was melted down in soul, made confession of sin, gained evidence of pardon, became a pattern to young people, and passed away to heaven in the fellowship of those she had despised.

DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE

This doctrine of an instantaneous change of heart, as will be perceived, goes deep into the life of man, involving his intellect, will, and affections. The mind perceives clearly the real source and power of the life hid with Christ in God, the will lays hold upon that power, renouncing all other sources of pardon and redemption, and the affections come into sweet, close, and trustful relations to the Sav-

iour as "my Christ," my own and only Saviour. That such a change can be instantaneous and yet thorough and all-embracing is one of the "mysteries of godliness." The whole experience becomes as fresh and new as life to a newborn babe; indeed, it implies a birth, the new birth, a new creature in Christ Jesus. All things wear a different look, the heart undergoes a transformation, the character a new molding, and the whole life a complete revival. It is the result of divine power exercised upon human nature, and constitutes really a supernatural change. If the conduct before was right new motions and activities are given to it, and if wrong a radical revolution takes place. Thus, a strictly moral man by conversion becomes as much a new creature as a wicked man, though his outward life may not undergo the same visible reconstruction. Whatever the previous habits, the result of conversion is always the awakening of new interests, the implanting of a new spirit, the cherishing of new desires, and the enthronement

ment of new motives, aspirations, and purposes. A mere moralist keeps the law, but a true Christian is kept by the higher law written on his heart. He does right not simply because it is better to do so, but because he cannot think of doing otherwise. He sees God and truth and loveliness in everything that is right and honorable, and sees Satan and error and ugliness in everything that is base and wrong. He serves God with gladness, and maintains his integrity as a matter of course. His morality is not only as complete as that of the moralist, but it is incidental to his spirituality and grows out of it. He does not pride himself in it, nor boast of it, but stays his soul on God and keeps the whole law of man from the inward impetus which the law of God stamped on his soul gives him.

WHAT CONVERSION DOES

The new spirit which conversion gives to an unrenewed heart is pleasantly signified by

an Irishman's description of his own conversion. As is well known, the Irish have always made good Methodists, or, if you prefer, Methodism has always made good Irishmen, and, either way, there is nothing better in Irish-Methodist experience than a work of grace which takes fight out of the heart.

"Be there a sad note
In an Irishman's lays,
Yet joy will be found
In his rhythmical line;
And be there a cloud,
Over all of his days,
He gladdens the rifts
With effulgence divine." *

The story of the Irishman's conversion was related by Rev. A. Youcler in the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, as follows:

"As I was comin' from town the other night a neighbor told me that there was a little lad in the schoolhouse beyont that crazed me son-in-law. Indade he was bad enough before, without makin' him worse, for he used to get drunk an' bate me darter; indade if I had been able I'd bate him.

* *Lyrics of the Lariat*, by Nathan Kirk Griggs.

"I said in me wrath, 'I'll take me wa happer [cane] and I'll go over and bate him.' Well, when I came to the schoolhouse, it was that paleface, no teeth a-hitterin' fellow, Pomeroy. 'Troth,' I said, 'I'll not take a napper to that fellow, for I can bate him without it.' I met me son-in-law sittin' there, an' he never looked so dacent before. But he was sayin' 'Amen,' and I could not tell what they were all amenin' about.

"The first thing the cratur said was that we were all sinners, and I said, 'That's true for ye.' And the next thing the cratur said was, 'We're all goin' to hell.' And I said, 'Mebbe ye'll be there first.' And the next thing he said was that we could all get good an' go to heaven. And I said, 'Not so bad for the cratur.'

"And there was a load come upon me, the weight of the stone, and I said, 'I'll leave; I'll stay here no longer.' I got up to go out, and I getted him by the coat tail and went out behint him. And when I got out there was

a weight upon me, the weight of a stone. And I knelt down in the snow bank, and I prayed and I prayed, and when I got up there wasn't the weight of the down on a goose's back upon me. And ever since the Hooly Ghost has had a wee house to me heart."

OPERATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

THE doctrine of the witness of the spirit is not original with Methodism, but the emphasis given to it by Methodism makes it seem peculiar.

St. Paul, speaking of the spirit of adoption, adds, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8. 16). This is a plain and positive assertion that God does give to man the assurance of adoption into his family. In John 5. 11 this assurance is called "the record," or testimony. This testimony is given by the Spirit of God to and with our own spirit. It is what Wesley denominates as that "inward impression on the soul whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that

all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God. Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean thereby, that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart, though he often may, one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm. The heart rests as in the arms of Jesus; and the sinner is clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his iniquities are forgiven and his sins covered.”*

It is clear, then, that the witness of the Spirit is not a reflex act, but it is God himself shining on the soul, as a reconciled Father, dispensing doubt and fear from the mind. The reflex acts follow, as the soul turns its eye inward upon its own state and actions.

*Sermon on the Witness of the Spirit,

Paul says again, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into your hearts" (Gal. 4. 6). And John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5. 10). Language could not make it plainer that the divine Spirit, proceeding from the Father and from the Son, does enter into and unite with the human spirit, at the moment of adoption, to give consciousness of the great spiritual transition. Blessed truth and precious Comforter!

This is the doctrine which Jesus himself had in mind when he said, "Ye shall *know* the doctrine." The mission of Jesus into this world was to give "knowledge of salvation;" not salvation alone, but the "knowledge" of it. This knowledge was foreshadowed in the experience of God's ancient saints. "The psalmist said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." The marginal reading in this case is preferable to the accepted—"and his covenant to make them know it." This makes the cove-

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nant the subject, and not the object, of the verb. So that the whole should read, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and his covenant is that he will make them know it," that is, know the secret. God has no richer secret to make known to those that fear him with loving holy fear than the secret that he has saved them. "His secret is with the righteous." He hides it in their hearts, and they know of the hiding. It is to them a conscious and precious truth, just as actual as any other fact of experience. Hence Mr. Wesley observed: "How does it appear to you, that you are alive, and that you are now at ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness you will know if your soul is alive to God; if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight in God. By the same you must be directly assured if you love your neighbor

as yourself; if you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and long-suffering."

If it be asked, How can God thus witness to man? How can the infinite intelligence produce such an impression upon the finite soul? the answer is, He does it, and that is enough to satisfy us. Many things happen in this world that cannot be explained, but mystery does not diminish their value nor lessen their truth. How can men communicate their thoughts to each other? We know that the process is by words and sounds, but the deeper mystery we cannot fathom. How can a mother impress upon the mind of her helpless babe the truth of her love? The babe understands no words, nor the significance of sounds. Yet the answering smile and the playful trust tell plainly that it feels the truth. Surely the infinite God who created us and knows us well, can bear witness with our spirits, as easily as a mother with her child, to the fact of his love,

In this connection let us refer to the doctrine of "The Spirit-filled life. From the prominence given in recent years to this idea one would be led to suppose that the doctrine is new, and is for the first time conferring its benefits upon the world. This is very far from the truth. No Christian doctrine is older. The Church of England Prayer Book abounds with it. In her daily service she teaches all to beseech God to "grant us his Holy Spirit that those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life may be pure and holy;" that he would send down upon all the clergy and people "the heartfelt Spirit of his grace;" and that "we may receive more abundantly the Spirit of God in our hearts." "O, what comfort is this to the heart of a true Christian, to think that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in him." All the collects are full of petitions for the guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit. So with the writings of John Wesley. They magnify the office and work of the Spirit in the truly

saved heart. He goes as far as to say that "every good gift is from God, and is given to man by the Holy Spirit. By nature there is in us no good thing; and there can be none, but so far as it is wrought in us by that good Spirit." Methodism has always made the Spirit-filled life a prominent feature. She is justified in this, too, by the abundant teaching of the word of God.

At Pentecost the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2. 2). Peter was "filled with the Holy Ghost" when he arose to defend himself before the Jewish council (Acts 4. 8). Paul at conversion was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9. 17). So he was when he rebuked Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13. 9). He prayed that the Ephesian brethren might be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3. 19). He exhorted them to "be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5. 18). The angel said of John that he should "be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1. 15). Eliza-

beth, his mother, and Zacharias, his father, were both "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1. 41-67). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was constantly in the presence and life of the Spirit. The angel said to her, "The Lord is with thee;" "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (Luke 1. 28-32). Jesus himself was always filled with the Spirit. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3. 34). He said himself, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; for the Lord has anointed me to preach the Gospel" (Luke 4. 18). Our Lord inaugurated the dispensation of the Spirit and promised his Spirit to comfort his people and to reprove the world of sin until the end of time. We live in the dispensation of the Spirit, and are to live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and manifest the fruits of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which makes us "free from the law of sin and death," and we are divinely assured that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." It is by "the Spirit of adoption" that

we first cry, Abba, Father, and it is the Spirit of assurance which "beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8. 15, 16). We know not how a Bible truth could be made more prominent than Methodists from the beginning have made this, and the fact that earnest people of other denominations are just fairly waking up to the idea is only another illustration of the fact that everything good in Methodism is sure sooner or later to be picked up and pushed forward under some guise or in some modified form by Christians who will have none of it while it remains distinctively the working feature of another Church.

PROGRESS IN THE JUSTIFIED STATE

It is a pity that so few writers on the spiritual life have enlarged with proper enthusiasm upon the inexpressibly rich and precious emotions attending justification.

“Tongue can never express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love.”

When a person is justified two other things occur, namely, regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit and adoption of the soul into the family of God. This threefold experience gives a substantial basis for growth and progress. The soul is now alive unto God, and live things generally grow until they reach maturity. Peter commands us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Christ

taught us to grow from sprout to blade; from blade to ear; from ear to full corn in the ear. He desires that none should be barren or unfruitful in the kingdom of God.

Growth is proof of life. Advancement is evidence of effort. We grow by keeping ourselves under the laws of growth. We advance by keeping ourselves in touch with power, or rather in the exercise of power. God's plan is that every life shall advance toward life's divinest end. Once brought into harmony with him, he designs that we shall become more like him, better fitted to reign with him, more and more full of his love, and more and more abounding in his holy work.

Now, what are the conditions for continuance in such a state. Wesley said that "a clear conviction of the love of God cannot remain in any who do not walk closely with God." He testified that he knew "no one person who had lost this without some voluntary defect in his conduct, though perhaps at the time he was not conscious of it, but upon

prayer it was revealed to him." It follows that the justified persons must give heed to his calling lest he lose the ground of his confidence and fail to make headway in working out his salvation.

Suppose that the justified Christian does not interest himself in the teachings of the Bible as to the conditions of progress, the laws of growth, and the sweet possibilities of advancement in grace, what will be the consequence? Can he retain his justification if he lives, or go to heaven if he dies. It is upon this point that light needs to be thrown.

No doubt would I cast upon the precious truth that heaven is the inheritance of God's children, that adoption gives title to it, and that the justified person, dying in the state of justification, enters upon his inheritance. So far, so good. But what is the essential part of heaven? Is it not to see God, to know God, to love God, and to be prepared to enjoy his presence forever? Is it not to be with Jesus, to be like Jesus, and to enjoy his sanc-

tity and approval to all eternity? And did not John state a most significant and vital truth when he said, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure"? Do we want heaven simply because we are legally or graciously entitled to it? or do we want it because we feel ready to enjoy it, to share its purity, its delightful service, and bring honor to Him who hath washed us and made us white in the blood of the Lamb?

Evidently such a preparation for heaven is not the immediate and sole result of justification. Eternal blessedness is not the fruit of mere forgiveness. The justified soul is an accepted candidate for heaven, but the candidacy, if life continues, implies more than standing still. Let us consult with God about this matter. Hear him:

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." "If any man say, I know him,

and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand," etc.

In the foregoing inspired statements we find that "keeping the commandments," looking after "the great salvation," and "doing the will of the Father," are all involved in the idea of continuing in the justified state. In keeping the commandments we must keep all of them, not excepting that big one, "Be ye holy." The justified person is expected to be as holy according to his light and knowledge as those who have advanced much faster in Christian experience. The truth is, the justified life, or, rather, the regenerated life, is the beginning of the holy life; it involves

obedience, search for the fullness of the blessing, and a constant effort to do the will of God. The pardon of sin to-day implies all that, and also some progress to-morrow. "The path of the just(ified) is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." How can there be "more and more" of this shining unless there be more and more of progress in this pathway? Paul said at the end of his journey, "I have fought," "I have finished," "I have kept;" "henceforth, the crown." Evidently he had no thought that heaven was the reward of his conversion. The crown awaited him because under God he had fitted himself to wear it.

The Christian life is very simple. It is pardon of sin and then pushing ahead for everything that God wants us to be and to do. This is practical. It is a phase of duty that anyone can understand. Be sure your past sins are forgiven, and then live so that God can approve your spirit and progress every moment afterward.

A marked proof that regeneration is not the finality of spiritual experience is to be found in the fact that new converts almost invariably express a desire for completeness in the good work already begun. After a sound conversion there is generally an emotion of great joy and happiness mingled with the sense of peace. This continues for a time, and then a struggle often ensues. The soul becomes dissatisfied with itself, its state of advancement, its clearness of vision, its consciousness of liberty, and its sense of the abiding presence of Christ. There is a conception of richer possibilities in grace, and consequently a holy yearning after better things.

Some religious teachers explain this phenomenon as a temptation of the devil. No doubt the evil one does need to be guarded against at this point, but there is a philosophy of soul life which also requires consideration. The truth is that the experience of regenerating grace is only the beginning of God's

great work in a believing heart—the portico, as it were, to the spiritual edifice which the all-wise Master Builder has begun to erect within. When this portico is passed there opens before the spiritual eye a scene of classic beauty, touched by angel fingers, and representing the rich things in store for the worthy heir to immortal honors.

When a person is convicted of sin and resolves to lead a new life the burden of the desire is to be pardoned. “Have mercy upon me,” is the cry. In this hour of penitence the thought rarely extends beyond the hope of pardon and the desire for adoption into the family of God. Then, when this goal is reached, the soul surveys its vantage ground, inhales deeply the invigorating atmosphere of the renewed life, catches a glimpse of the luscious fruits which overhang the straight pathway before it, and begins to reach out after higher and better things. The word of God is studied, the unsearchable riches of Christ are apprehended, the comfort of the

Spirit is felt, the encouragements to growth are realized, the fullness of the blessing discerned, and pretty soon the idea takes form that first principles should be left behind and the adoring heart should go on to perfection.

A close study of the word and of Christian biography will encourage this step. Then follows conviction for purity, and a search for the conditions of entrance upon this experience. Should the conditions be complied with, a distinct and precious blessing is often the result, followed by a far holier ardor to do good in the world.

It is a principle of the Christian life that if we would retain present blessings we must ever be reaching out after new ones. This is what may be called exercise in godliness. It is laying hold in earnest on eternal life. It is drinking at the fountain until "filled," and then using the refreshment to help others. Isaiah says the Lord's mercies are new every morning. If this be so, the Christian should seek a new supply every morning, and be

ready for new experiences throughout the day. The new life must never be allowed to get old. It never will and never does when supplied by "daily bread" from the hand of God.

SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

HOLINESS is a scriptural idea. The Bible is full of it. God's character is represented as holy. His name is holy. He dwelleth in the holy place. He is referred to as "glorious in holiness."

The old priesthood was also designated as holy. In 2 Chron. 31. 18 we are told that "in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness." To "sanctify" is to set apart to religious use, to make free from sin, to fit man for the service of God and the society of heaven.

The Church is designed to furnish a means and power of holiness. "Holiness becometh thine house." "Upon Mount Zion there shall be holiness." Any number of passages could be quoted to show that holiness is the normal condition of the Christian life.

Turn to Heb. 12. 9, 10: "Furthermore we

have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." From this we infer that Christian holiness bears a semblance to divine holiness; that is, that the soul "partakes" of—takes a part in—the holiness of God. The idea is that Christian holiness has some of the properties of divine holiness, and that by experience the Christian becomes a sharer in the holiness which God designs his creatures to have.

Turn next to Eph. 4. 23, 24: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is clear that Christian holiness is a "creation" (meaning that something is brought into the human experience which was not there before), and that the creation of this new experience is after the divine pattern—"after God."

Pass on to 1 Thess. 3. 12, 13: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God." This teaches us that God is the author of holiness, and that he establishes it in human hearts that "abound in love." In the next chapter (seventh verse) we read, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The divine aim and purpose is to make us holy. We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7. 1). Holiness is, therefore, a cleansing away of all uncleanness and the implanting of divine grace that we may gain fitness for holy associations.

Let some facts now be stated:

1. Holiness is Godlikeness, or godliness. It is not to be divine. "Ye shall be as gods" is Satan's lie. There is one God, only one. We shall never be anything but human, nor

do we need to be, and need not desire to be. But the human can partake of the divine. Man was created in the moral image of God. By sin he lost that image. The design of the Gospel is to restore. Yet so terrible are the effects of sin that many believe it impossible for man to regain any semblance of that state of holiness which he lost by the fall. His judgment is weakened. He is marred by sin. His is an evil heart of unbelief. All that he gains in holiness is attributable only to divine grace. The degree of holiness possible to each one is best determined by a personal trial.

2. Holiness is sanctification complete. Sanctification begins with the new birth, and should be carried on to perfection. The moment we experience God's saving grace in our hearts we cease from willful transgression. Our whole desire now is conformity to the will of God. We turn away from the sinful to that which is good, and we ask God to make the transformation complete; when he does so we are holy. Sometimes this blessing is called

“entire sanctification.” This is not a Scriptural phrase, but there are passages which justify it. Writing to the Thessalonian Christians, the apostle Paul says: “Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” This is a wonderful prayer, and it implies the possibility of a wonderful experience.

3. Holiness is presented in many passages as “perfect love.” God is love, and just in proportion as we are like God do we abound in love. The sum of the commandments is that we love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves. To keep this commandment is to become perfect in love, and to become perfect in love is to be holy. This is all Mr. Wesley and other trustworthy teachers have meant by the term “Christian perfection.” He said, “Perfection is nothing

higher and nothing lower than this—the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbors as ourselves.” This is the perfection we ask in song:

“Come, Saviour, come, and make me whole;
Entirely all my sins remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.”

Therefore, when you speak of Christian perfection do not think of absolute perfection—this belongs to God only; nor of angelic perfection—this belongs to angels only; nor of Adamic perfection—this belonged to a human nature unmarred by sin. Speak and think of Christian perfection as that state of grace in which the soul loves God with all the heart, and neighbor as itself. It is a unique experience. It can be compared only with itself. It is all of grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and of normal growth in the religious life. It differs in intensity and completeness in different individuals, just as regeneration does. Its fullness depends upon

the previous life, the power of faith, the mental endowments, and various other environments. In its smallest degree it is an unspeakably rich blessing, a prize to be sought after with all diligence. It should be prayerfully sought rather than argued about. When we get to heaven we must have it; better take it with us and have a good start in the blessedness of the glory land.

TRAINING OF YOUTH

METHODISM holds that infants dying in infancy are eternally saved. The atonement provides unconditionally for those who pass from earth while yet innocent of willful sin.

Jesus said of children, "Of such is the kingdom of God," meaning that the relation of infants to the covenant of grace is such as to bring them clearly within its benefits, and that all true subjects of his kingdom are, like children, made innocent in heart and life. If the infant is an heir of immortality, so are such adults as comply with the conditions of entrance upon the heavenly inheritance.

David said, "In sin did my mother conceive me." No infant is born in a state of holiness. The poison of original sin is in every constitution. The native depravity of man is such that as soon as a child approaches

adult age the innocence of infancy uniformly fades away and the need of a new heart manifests itself. This is the point in early life when wise and diligent attention should be bestowed.

THE NURTURE OF CHILDHOOD

Wesley held that true religion should be instilled into the minds of children as early as possible. His language is: "From the very time that reason dawns, laying line upon line, precept upon precept, as soon and as fast as they are able to bear it." "Scripture, reason, and experience jointly testify that, inasmuch as the corruption of nature is earlier than our instructions can be, we should take all pains and care to counteract this corruption as early as possible. The bias of nature is set the wrong way; education is designed to set it right. This, by the grace of God, is to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge, and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God. And

from the moment we perceive any of those evil roots springing up it is our business immediately to check their growth, if we cannot yet root them out."

A PLAN OF INSTRUCTION INSTITUTED

Mr. Wesley was so solicitous for the correct training of the child mind that he early and seriously called the attention of his preachers to the subject.

"What shall we do for the rising generation?" he asked. And here are the answers he helped to frame:

"1. Where there are ten children in a society, meet them at least an hour every week.

"2. Talk with them every time you see any at home.

"3. Pray in earnest for them.

"4. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses.

"5. Preach expressly on education. . . . 'But I have no gift for this.' Gift or no gift,

you art to do it; else you are not called to be a Methodist preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift and use the means for it."

It will thus be seen that Methodism from the start has been in earnest for the salvation of boys and girls.

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER

Our present Disciplinary provisions all have this important end in view. Reasoning people know that childhood offers the supreme opportunity for shaping character. It is the most propitious period in life for instilling those precepts, ingrafting those truths, and forming those habits which adorn a Christian soul. In the vicinity of Paris there is a quarry the stones from which are at first soft and pliable, but after being laid in the wall they become hard as adamant. The youthful mind is like that pliant stone. In its early state you can shape it almost as you will, but when it is

once shapen and set it becomes firm and hard. Some one has said that, "It is common sense to put the seal to the wax while it is soft, to bud the tender twig with the fruit it should bear, to go to the fountain head to guide the current of the stream, and to lay hold on the young tendrils of the shooting vine, and to train them as we would have them go." Who, wishing to give a sapling a peculiar bend, would wait "till the nursling had become a full-grown tree"? Mirabeau was once asked what was the best way of teaching popular liberty. He replied, "Begin with the infant in the cradle, and let the first name it learns to lisp be 'Washington.'" So, in teaching religion, begin wisely at the cradle, and let the first name be "Jesus." There is magic in that name. Write it on the heart, impress it on the moral nature. Have faith in childhood and in the God of childhood. Claim the tender plants for Christ. Train them in piety and wisdom. Pray for them. Labor with them. Bring them to church. Let pas-

tors endeavor to win them by making sermons that they can understand. Grown people love such sermons as much as children do. By any means, by all means, win the lambs of the flock for the sheltering fold of the great Shepherd. Mr. Spurgeon used to say that those church members who gave him the least trouble were those who gave their hearts to Jesus when young. When a child is old enough to love, to trust, and to obey its parents, it is old enough to love, trust, and obey Christ. The Bible never makes age a condition of salvation; and when Christ is truly accepted, then Christ should be openly confessed. What is the use of having a fold if the lambs are to be kept out until they can stand the winter?

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

Devoted Christians of a very early day sought to bring children together for catechetical instruction on the Lord's Day. In

England, in 1769, Miss Hannah Ball taught a religious school on Saturday and Sunday, and reported progress to Mr. Wesley. In 1781, Miss Cook, prompted by Robert Raikes, taught the neglected street waifs of Gloucester to read, and also took them to church. Several schools were then organized and sustained through the wealth of Mr. Raikes. Mr. Wesley heard of them, liked the idea, and suggested the plan of securing volunteer teachers to establish schools in all his congregations.

In 1784, at the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it was recommended that Methodist children should meet once a week for religious instruction. In 1786 Bishop Asbury instituted at the house of Thomas Crenshaw, in Hanover County, Virginia, the first regular Sunday school in America, and four years later the General Conference ordered Sunday schools to be established for the instruction of poor children, white and black, in learning and piety, being the first American Church to recognize this institu-

tion, which is now so influential and powerful. Here is the text of General Conference action in 1790:

“Q. What can be done for the instruction of poor children (whites and blacks) to read?

“A. Let us labor, as the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the bishops, elders, deacons, or preachers to teach gratis all that will attend, and have a capacity to learn, from six o'clock in the morning till ten; and from two o'clock in the afternoon until six, where it does not interfere with public worship.”

The extent to which Sunday school work is now carried on, both in Europe and America, indicates that so powerful and useful a factor in Christian labor can never cease. So long as there is a Sabbath day and live Christians in this wicked world, so long will effort be put forth to do good to children in Sunday schools. The tree planted so long ago has budded abundantly, brought forth boughs like

a plant, and must be made to yield yet richer fruit unto God.

THE EPWORTH LEAGUE

It was to be expected that in the fullness of time a young people's society worthy of Methodism should take form, name, character, and mission. Accordingly, on the 15th day of May, 1889, in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, the Epworth League emerged. Several societies for youth had previously been organized, but none on such a broad and comprehensive basis. The name "Epworth League" was chosen in preference to the Oxford League, the Wesley League, the Christian League, and some others which were suggested, because, without being either pretentious or sectarian, it did savor of Methodist origin and a distinctive purpose.

The Maltese cross was adopted as the badge, and a white ribbon with a central scarlet thread was chosen as the colors. The motto, "Look up; lift up," became the Epworth legend, and at the General Conference of 1892

the constitution was adopted. The object is "to promote intelligent and vital piety in the young members and friends of the Church, to aid them in the attainment of purity of heart and constant growth in grace, and to train them in works of mercy and help"—a mission truly worthy of Christian endeavor.

The League has since been organized in other branches of Methodism, and in England under the style of the "Wesley Guild." The Junior department aims to provide Epworth League benefits for boys and girls, especially in the direction of training for Christian work.

HIGHER EDUCATION

METHODISM originated in a college atmosphere. Its founders were students and tutors in a great university. John and Charles Wesley began in their college days, and continued to the end of their lives, the practice of conversing with each other in Latin. In their daily walks and rides they studied instructive books, and discoursed on thoughtful themes. Their public addresses and sermons, as well as their private letters and conversations, all breathe the educational spirit.

John Wesley especially became one of the foremost scholars of his own or any other age. He was a student in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew, and Arabic. He could converse in German and Latin, and could hold church services in French and Italian. He wrote text-books and histories in several of

these languages, and had a fine teaching knowledge in several sciences, in philosophy and literary lore. He was the author of a complete dictionary of the English language. He lived to learn, and to encourage learning in others. In August, 1831, writing to one of his pupils, he said:

“You, who have not the assurance of a day to live, are not wise if you waste a moment. The shortest way to knowledge seems to be this: 1. To ascertain what knowledge you desire to attain. 2. To read no book which does not in some way tend to the attainment of that knowledge. 3. To read no book which does not tend to the attainment of it, unless it be the best in its kind. 4. To finish one before you begin another. 5. To read them all in such order that every subsequent book may illustrate and confirm the preceding.”*

The above bit of advice shows the instincts and knowledge of a true educator. The rules laid down are even more applicable now than

* *Methodist Magazine*, 1850, page 1064.

they were when given, because worthless or unhelpful books have so greatly multiplied, and modern educational methods are so diversified and in some respects confusing.

The school at Kingswood, which Whitefield commenced, and of which Wesley afterward became sole proprietor, though never an ideal one, nevertheless became far-famed, and by many years of checkered history demonstrated his persistent belief that all Christian workers are at their best when possessing trained intellects as well as sanctified hearts. The opinion has been expressed that had he undervalued education, or had he not by example and precept earnestly encouraged it among his people, the societies he formed would not long have held together, and the great revival he introduced would have rapidly subsided, and would probably have had no historian.

Seven great facts can be affirmed of Methodism in respect to education:

1. She has sought to train her own teachers and preachers, impressing them first of all

with the truth that saving souls is the great end of their work, but that a thorough mental preparation is an important means to that end. "Getting knowledge is good; saving souls is better." Education is subordinate, not coordinate, but it is indispensable to leadership. Methodism seeks the right men for ministers, and the correct training for these chosen men. Her Conference courses of study, as well as her institutions of higher learning, bespeak her solicitude for intelligence in her pulpits.

2. She has sought to make her educational work practical and popular. She has designed her schools to turn out good citizens and useful members of society. The late President Joseph Cummings claimed that the graduates of Methodist schools, in sturdy independence of thought, in self-reliance, in practical power over men, in usefulness and influence, and in the amount of work accomplished, have surpassed the same number of graduates, not specially selected, of any other colleges in the country.

3. She has sought to produce symmetrical scholarship and well-balanced and thoroughly rounded characters. She has united secular with moral and religious education, seeking to produce whole men as well as holy men. She has not interfered with the Church relations or sectarian opinions of her students. She has required that they abstain from vice and live moral lives, and she has thrown around them wholesome religious influences, but never has invaded the domain of their intellectual freedom. Revivals have characterized her college life, but her graduates have gone forth with untrammelled thought.

4. She has aimed to give women as high educational advantages as men. Coeducation has been a fact if not a watchword. She has acted upon the principle that women are quite as much free moral agents as men are, and just as accountable to God for the training and use of their gifts and powers.

5. She has sought through educational agencies to equip her missionaries and teachers for

the capture of all mankind, and not of any one particular class. She has remembered the poor, the ignorant, and the wretched, and has not forgotten the rich, the wise, and the prosperous. She holds that the favored classes of society have souls to be saved, and has trained her workers for success in laboring with them.

6. She has depended upon Christian education, as well as the grace of God, for an antidote to skeptical tendencies. She fears no truth, scientific or otherwise, but proposes to raise up scholars capable of ascertaining truth and of stating it for themselves. It is folly for a Church to be intellectually at the mercy of the giants of unbelief.

7. She has provided for the thorough culture of her sons and daughters because she wishes them to maintain leadership in any and all the ranks of life. The increase of general intelligence is one of the wonders of our times. The wide extent of commerce and trade, the vast development of newspaper and periodical literature, the boundless resources and keen

competition of the industries and arts, the breadth of intercourse and rapidity of communication in ordinary business life as well as in the learned professions, renders it necessary that the common man or woman shall occupy the position of a thinker and a critic. Methodism must be up with the times, must possess and utilize the means for securing the highest mental discipline and keep step with the march of progressive thought.

The birth-year of organized British Methodism was 1739, and in that year also the foundations of Kingswood School was laid. Thus Church and school started together.

The first provision for higher education in American Methodism was the establishment of Cokesbury College at Abington, Maryland. Its name was a combination of the names of Coke and Asbury, who were chiefly instrumental in founding it. It was opened for students September 17, 1787, and was under the presidency of the bishops. It was supported by annual collections in the circuits.

It had three objects in view: 1. To educate the sons of ministers; 2. To educate poor orphans; 3. To provide a seminary for other Methodist children where learning and religion might go hand in hand. The students were instructed in English, Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric, history, geography, natural philosophy, and astronomy. Other languages and sciences were to be added as the school should develop. Wisdom and holiness were the watchwords. The conditions of admission were strict, and purposely calculated to shut out vicious young men. The tuition fee was "four guineas a year." Here are some of the rules for the students, abridged:

1. Rise at five.
2. Prayers at six, then recreation.
3. Breakfast at seven.
4. Study from eight to twelve.
5. Recreation, dinner at one, then recreation until three.
6. Study from three until six.
7. Supper at six.

8. Prayers at seven.
9. Recreation until nine, then to bed.
10. Recreation to consist of walking, riding, bathing, gardening, and various mechanical trades.
11. No bathing in the river.
12. Only one minute in the bathtub.
13. No worldly playing.
14. Idleness to be punished by confinement.
15. Open sin to be reproved in private for first offense, in public for second, punished for the third, and if incorrigible, expelled.

In 1789, a gracious revival occurred among the students, showing its wholesome spiritual atmosphere.

In 1795 the college burned down, causing a loss of ten thousand dollars—a large amount for those days, representing the gifts of many poor people. A new enterprise was at once inaugurated at Baltimore, but in one year fire put an end to that.

The formation of academies next began.

One was started in Baltimore in 1817, another in New York, and another in New Hampshire. In 1823 Augusta College, in Kentucky, was organized, and in 1825 Madison College, in Pennsylvania. These were soon followed by many more, the spirit of education having become thoroughly aroused. North and south, east and west, among all branches of Methodism, seminaries, colleges, universities, biblical and theological schools, summer universities and training assemblies have been thoroughly established.

Many millions of dollars are now invested in Methodist educational institutions, and some far-reaching plans have been laid. It is proposed to provide for the highest educational advantages the world affords right here in America, so that our Methodist youth, male and female, need not go to Germany, England, Egypt, or anywhere else for the culture that equips for practical usefulness in the work of life.

Education to be true and progressive must

equip a person for his own life mission. It must embrace the best knowledge obtainable of both the past and present, and it must equip the intellectual faculties for a new stride ahead. Progress is impossible if one generation learns only what past generations have known and lived. There must be selection. The student should obey Wesley's first rule and ascertain what knowledge he requires for his particular calling and age, and he then must bend himself to the task of gaining wisdom from the best sources and by the most approved methods for his individual career.

PHILANTHROPY AND REFORM

THE determining quality of all true religion is its attitude toward the destitute, the afflicted, and the unfortunate, and the provision it makes for their relief.

The old philosophies were strikingly deficient in this regard. The Epicureans were too busy with feasting and merry-making to feel much concern for the less favored classes. The stoics were too closely occupied with the task of proving that happiness is not an essential of life, and that pain may be triumphed over, ever to give much heed to the living illustrations of suffering and woe.

Patriarchal piety was the first to inculcate that humane principle that man is "his brother's keeper." The Mosaic system was the first to provide practical measures for the relief of the poor and the refreshing of the stranger. (See Exod. 23. 9-13; Lev. 19. 10.) Huxley, the agnostic, truthfully confessed that

"there is no code of legislation, ancient or modern, at once so just and so merciful, so tender to the weak and poor, as the Jewish law." The Greeks with all their culture, and the Romans with all their power, never approached the Hebrews in instituting plans and methods for making the common life worth living. Only those who, through inspired light and knowledge, drew near to the loving heart of Jehovah ever felt the supernatural warmth which melts the human heart into pity and compassion. The prophets and poets of the old dispensation rang the changes upon the blessedness of considering the poor and the righteousness of showing them mercy. Then came Jesus into the world, saying, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 6. 20). It was given out as one of the tokens of his Messiahship that "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them" (Matt. 11. 5). To the rich young man who sought his counsel how to inherit eternal life he laid down the crucial condition, "Sell

whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor” (Mark 10. 21).

And as the divine Teacher taught, so his followers practiced. The first churches under Paul’s ministrations made their contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15. 26). St. James, the conspicuous teacher of practical morality, laid down a definition which has commanded the universal admiration of the Christian continues: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1. 27). “Hearken,” said he, again; “hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?” “But ye have despised the poor.” “If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin” (James 2. 5, 6, 9).

WESLEY’S RULES

John Wesley, baptized with apostolic tenderness and patriarchal wisdom, like his Master

before him, "went about continually doing good." With his own face he begged from door to door for help to his own scant purse to minister to the indigent and suffering. One of the very first rules he laid down to his stewards was:

"If you cannot relieve, do not grieve the poor; give them soft words, if nothing else; abstain from either sour looks, or harsh words. Let them be glad to come, even though they should go empty away. Put yourself in the place of every poor man; and deal with him as you would God should deal with you."* After one of his own rounds of visitation he wrote: "I visited as many as I could of the sick. How much better is it, when it can be done, to *carry* relief to the poor than to *send* it! and that both for our own sake and theirs. For *theirs*, as it is so much more comfortable to them, and as we may then assist them in spirituals as well as temporals; and for *our*

* This rule was No. 11 in the schedule of instructions given to the stewards at Moorsfield in 1747,

own, as it is far more apt to soften our heart, and to make us naturally care for each other." Writing to one of his members in 1776, he gave this loving counsel: "I have found some of the uneducated poor who have exquisite taste and sentiment; and many, very many, of the rich who have scarcely any at all. But I do not speak of this: I want you to converse more, abundantly more, with the poorest of the people, who, if they have not taste, have souls, which you may forward in their way to heaven. And they have (many of them) faith, and the love of God, in a larger measure than any persons I know. Creep in among these, in spite of dirt and a hundred disgusting circumstances; and thus put off the gentlewoman. Do not confine your conversation to genteel and elegant people. I should like this as well as you do; but I cannot discover a precedent for it in the life of our Lord or any of his apostles. My dear friend, let you and I walk as he walked."

It was just such Christ-like habits and

common-sense rules as the above that gave to early Methodism its power of expansion. Its very spirit was a protest against every form of luxury and extravagance. The General Rules, which were read publicly every few weeks, embodying as they did those moral, charitable, and practical elements of Bible religion, became the crystallization of Gospel grace and tenderness. The powerful sermons of Wesley, backed up as they were by personal practice, served as an almost inspired medium for the popularization of doctrines and principles which were more like the teachings of Moses and David and Christ and Paul and James than anything that had been heard on earth for fifteen hundred years. Not that they contained a different Gospel from that of other evangelical Churches, but that they had a way of presenting it that suited the poor and met the mournful necessities of their condition.

THE CHURCH OF THE POOR

It was a fact in the life of our Lord that when he rose to speak the poor, the needy, the outcast, the lonely, the mourners, and the masses were drawn toward him as by unearthly power. They were conscious that One was among them who was touched with a feeling of their own infirmities, and most gladly they pressed near to his side and heard the Gospel from his lips. And may we not record, in no spirit of boasting, that a characteristic of Methodist ministration has been an uprising and an ingathering of the poor, just as if a special evangel had been instituted in their behalf? Surely there has been something in the popular yearning for this practical Gospel which seemed to testify, "Here is a real message from God to me; here are a people who seem to satisfy my wants and feelings, and who come with a message that meets the sad necessities of my being and life."

It will be a sorry day for Methodism if she

loses this lovely spirit of compassionate ministration for the lowly. The rich have souls to save, and we must not forget that fidelity to our calling demands plain preaching for those who pamper their bodies and deny their souls, but we must keep in mind the truth that those who are bound by lighter ties to the world are the easiest won for God. Riches indispose the heart toward God. Poverty engenders a frame of mind conducive to piety. And piety in turn establishes rules of life conducive to prosperity and happy living. Save the poor, therefore, and you help to lift up mankind. Save the poor, and you exemplify pure religion. Save the poor, and you accomplish the mission of Methodism and help to usher in the millennial glory of the Gospel.

“Speak gently, kindly to the poor;
Let no harsh term be heard;
They have enough they must endure,
Without an unkind word.”

TEMPERANCE

As with the poor, so with all other unfortunate classes. Deal with them mercifully.

Rescue them from the slavery of debasing habits. Strive to correct the tendencies that put them in chains. Methodism has always done this. It is related that a nobleman on one occasion sought to obtain liquor in a town in Cornwall, England, and became enraged because he could not get it. Asking an old man who was passing why there were no grog-shops in the place, he was told, "About a hundred years ago a man by the name of John Wesley came into these parts," and the old man passed on.

What a beautiful reply! How complimentary to the founder of our Church, and to his sons and daughters too! Wherever Methodists have their way no liquor is sold, and no drunkards are to be found.

Mr. Wesley, both by precept and example, enjoined upon his followers habits of strict sobriety, and total abstention from traffic in intoxicants. The American Methodists, too, early began to speak out plainly upon this subject, and they keep speaking plainly at this

day. As early as 1780 we find in the General Minutes that strong action was taken:

“*Q.* Do we disapprove of the practice of distilling grain into liquor? Shall we disown our friends who will not renounce the practice?

“*A.* Yes.”

Again, in 1783:

“*Q.* Should our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell, and drink them in drams?

“*A.* By no means. We think it wrong in its nature and consequences; and desire all the preachers to teach the people by precept and example to put away this evil.”

By word of Discipline, Methodists now “regard voluntary total abstinence from all intoxicants as the true ground of personal temperance, and complete legal prohibition of the traffic in alcoholic drinks as the duty of civil government.” The phrase, “The liquor traffic cannot be legalized without sin,” coined in 1888, has become a national watchword.

MISSIONARY ZEAL

"THE kingdom of God . . . is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it" (Luke 13. 18, 19).

History testifies that the entrance for Christianity in all the kingdoms and continents has been made by the foreign missionary. He is the man that takes the "seed" and casts it into his "garden." The garden may be at his own door, or far away; no matter, it is his if he tills it, and God takes care of the seed which he plants.

America is a Christian country by reason of the foreign missionary's work. Rev. Robert Hunt, of England, was the first to administer the holy communion to the Jamestown colony.

This was in 1607. A church was also built, and the "seed" was thus planted for the conversion of the "infidel savages." By the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, in 1620, "there were already in Virginia eleven parishes and five clergymen." The seed had "waxed a great tree."

Who introduced Christianity into England? It was a foreign missionary from Rome. His name was Augustine, afterward Archbishop of Canterbury, A. D. 597. The seed he planted has waxed not one mighty tree only, but a whole forest of them, dropping their fruits through other missionaries into all the lands of earth.

Who introduced Christianity into India? Dr. William Carey, from England, who entered India in 1793. Dr. Adoniram Judson, from the United States, who landed in Burma in 1814. The Gospel seeds they planted germinated and grew, and are producing in our own day the mightiest moral and social revolution ever known in the pagan world. The

great deep in India, Japan, and even in China is breaking up.

Methodism is a youthful development of good old Christianity, and the beauty of it is that the missionary spirit has characterized every step of its progress. Itself a missionary movement, it has not failed, in whatever country planted, to extend its stakes and enlarge the place of its tent. "The world is my parish," was its founder's motto and the actuating spirit of his life. From city to city, from nation to nation, across oceans and seas he flew on tireless wing to proclaim a full and free salvation. His sons and daughters in the Gospel inherited his zeal, and have handed it down through the generations to us. Wherever you find a Methodist church you find a collection plate that wears out but never rusts. The claims of the poor, the instruction of the ignorant, the awakening of the careless, the evangelization of the masses both at home and abroad and the erection of chapels and churches in poor settlements on the frontiers

are some phases of a common missionary cause that lies near the Methodist heart. Differ as they may in questions of denominational expediency, all branches of Methodism are enthusiastically persuaded that the mission of the Church is to convert the world and bring it home to God, and that a goodly share of this tremendous responsibility rests with those who believe and teach the doctrines of free grace.

The inception of foreign missions as a part of the work of Methodism is found in the very terse words of certain questions proposed in the Wesleyan Conference of 1769, and the answers given :

“What is reserved for contingent expenses?”

“Nothing.”

“We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York (who have built a preaching house), to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?”

“Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor.”

"What can we do further in token of our brotherly love?"

"Let us now make a collection among ourselves."

"What is the whole debt remaining?"

"Between five and six thousand pounds."

So between the pressure of two difficulties—an empty treasury and a heavy debt—these early itinerants take up the collection and start their first mission.

In the Minutes of 1771 these words appear:

"Our brethren in America call loudly for help. Who are willing to go over and help them?"

Five responded, but only two—Francis Asbury and Richard Wright—were sent.

Two years later eight names appear, and in five years more (1778) a membership of nearly seven thousand was reported from the "mission."

In 1784 Thomas Coke, Wesley's associate in London, was appointed to America, and in the course of the year he and Asbury were or-

dained superintendents, and from that time forward the American mission became a separate Church.

But Mr. Wesley wanted a mission still, and so, while providing for the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he began casting about for another mission to foster. He says: "I desired all our preachers to meet and consider thoroughly the proposal of sending missionaries to the East Indies. After the matter had been fully considered we were unanimous in our judgment that we have no call thither yet, no invitation, no providential opening of any kind." Like the apostles, he was waiting for the cry, "Come over and help us," and he was also intently listening lest that cry might be sounding from some foreign shore with no one to send back a pitying response.

As with Wesley, so with his colleagues. They were all imbued with the same broad spirit of love for their fellow-men, no matter where on earth those men might be found.

The eye of Dr. Coke, himself the most illustrious example of devotion to the interests of the heathen, fell upon Ceylon, and away he flew with a little band at his own expense to plant the Gospel among the Ceylonese. He sleeps within the bosom of the Indian Ocean, the first great gift of Methodism for the redemption of India. His missionaries who survived him erected the standard of the cross on that fragrant island, then crossed over to India and China, South Africa, Western Africa, and elsewhere to make known the Gospel of conversion first, and form and doctrine afterward.

Methodism is a born missionary. For forty years every Methodist preacher was a missionary. One of the fundamental regulations was, "Let every Methodist preacher consider himself as called to be, in point of enterprise, zeal, and diligence, a home missionary." And sometimes that word "home" embraced everything within the range of travel. Dr. Coke went everywhere. He visited Ireland annually. He

traversed England, Scotland, Wales, and crossed the Atlantic eighteen times. To the end of his seventy years of life he had charge of Wesleyan missions throughout the world. He founded the negro missions of the West Indies, spent his own fortune in planting missions, and begged for missions from door to door. While he lived it was not deemed necessary to organize a missionary society, for he embodied that interest in his own person. He was called "the foreign minister of Methodism." His zeal for missions was simply the essence of Methodism.

The expressive hymns of Charles Wesley are surcharged with the missionary spirit. The sigh of his very being was,

"O for a trumpet voice,
On all the world to call!"

As far as his voice could be heard he was ever crying,

"Look unto him, ye nations; own
Your God, ye fallen race."

And no doubt these hymns have gone far to foster in Methodism the heartfelt pity for

“The heathen lands that lie beneath
The shades of everlasting death.”

Probably there never has been since the days of the great missionary to the Gentiles another band of men so completely devoted to the fulfilling of the command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

“It was a glad day for the world when American Methodism took its place in the system of universal evangelization as an independent Church. It was in its organization essentially a missionary scheme. Francis Asbury and his fourscore associate preachers were all missionaries, and all eager for the upbuilding of a Church through whose agency the work of Jesus should keep pace with the growth of the young republic. The last British sentry in the War of the Revolution had left his post and gone home. The stars

and stripes of American independence floated where had waved the imperial standard of England. National America had taken the place of colonial America. Washington was the builder of the new republic. Asbury contemporaneously, under the blessing of God, laid broad and deep the foundations of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. Every man of them, from Bishop Asbury down, was an organized missionary society in himself and filled with the spirit of an intense evangelism. Under men of God thus equipped, armed with weapons not shaped by mortal skill, strong-souled, earnest men, knights of the true order of Jesus, leagued in solemn covenant, American Methodism grew mightily and prevailed.”*

And the missionary spirit of these pioneers flamed on in energy, taking form in the organization of the Missionary Society in 1819, and in other missionary organizations since that day, providing for a world-wide, system-

* General Clinton B. Fisk.

atic, persistent, enthusiastic, and unyielding proclamation of the Gospel among all the nations of the earth.

Nowhere has the sublime injunction of our departing Lord, "Go ye, preach the Gospel," found a more hearty or ready response than among the American Methodists. And why should it not be so? What else have Christians to do upon this earth but to evangelize its people? With all that has yet been done, probably eight hundred millions, represented by the "every creature," have not heard the Gospel. Paul is dead. Wesley is dead. Coke is dead. Thousands of missionaries have fallen, but the world is not redeemed. Who shall stay his hand, or shut his purse, or steel his heart, or lapse into indifference while the vast masses of mankind are "without God and without hope"?

The truth is that aggressive missionary work is both the token and promoter of spiritual life in the Church. The lack of this spirit is always the sign of weakness and decay, and

infidelity is never more rife or powerful than when professing Christians have reached that condition of apathy in which they manifest no concern for lost souls. As Christ loved the world, and gave his life for it, so his loyal followers love the world and give what they have for its redemption. Love for Christ and love for souls are the moving forces of Christian achievement. No higher motive can stir human hearts. When these die out, farewell to the power of Christianity and the hope of the world. While these live on, missionaries will continue to go out, and prayer will continue to follow them, that the seed they sow may "grow up and shoot out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."

UTILIZATION OF LAY TALENT

IF in her external life Methodism has one essential which is providential and important above another, it is that of effectively utilizing the talents of laymen.

John Wesley was at first averse to lay preaching, and his brother Charles denounced it as "a pestilent error," nevertheless they both lived to recognize its great usefulness and popularity.

Thomas Maxfield was the father of lay preaching. He was a fervent Christian and a mighty expounder of the Scriptures. Many were saved under his preaching, yet Wesley considered it "irregular" and would probably have proceeded against it but for his mother, who said, "John, take care what you do; that young man is as surely called of God to preach as you are." Wesley then went to hear Maxfield, and agreed with his mother as to

Maxfield's call. From that time on lay preaching had free course. Indeed, Methodism could hardly have flourished without it. Its principal promoters, save a very few clergymen, were laymen. Even some of the clergymen who gave it support did not relinquish their Church affiliations and perquisites to do so. There was William Grimshaw, curate of Ilaworth, in Yorkshire, who though in close union with the Methodists, an ardent assistant of its founder, and the mainstay of the connection in that part of the country, did not sever his relation with the established Church. He was a natural orator, carrying fire wherever he went, yet he lived and died an Episcopalian. The same is true of Fletcher, the sweet, devoted, seraphic vicar of Madeley. He belonged more to the Methodists than to the Establishment, yet he did not relinquish his hold upon the latter. Indeed, Mr. Wesley himself in his last days found consolation in the fact that he had "lived and died in the Church of England." It is due to Dr. Coke to say that

though capable of making his way to distinction in the church, he chose rather to become a plain Methodist preacher, to labor and suffer reproach and affliction with the despised and persecuted Methodists, than to enjoy ease and emoluments among those who manifested so little piety, and exhibited so little zeal in spreading righteousness and truth abroad.

The first layman, after Thomas Maxfield, who desired to serve Mr. Wesley as "a son in the Gospel" was Thomas Richards, and the third Thomas Westall, both of whom, with many more, became effective in converting sinners, organizing classes, and ministering to the needs of the people. In the selection of these lay preachers zeal was the principal qualification that Mr. Wesley required. The speaker was expected to produce results, the judgment was to be convinced and the emotions stirred, else his ardor soon cooled and the candidate quietly withdrew from the field. In some instances enthusiasm was united with

great strength of mind and character, and Wesley knew how to seize such valuable elements and mold them for good use in his Master's service. Wesley licensed his own lay preachers without recommendation from the societies, but after his death the candidates were required to avail themselves of formal recommendations.

Local preachers have always constituted a strong arm of the Methodist service, and in the early days became more numerous than the itinerants, and were almost as conspicuous, in a few instances even more so.

Three of the founders of American Methodism were local preachers, and their names will be held in reverence as long as Christianity endures. The first of these is

PHILIP EMBURY,

the first class leader and local preacher on the American continent. He was a serious-minded and thoughtful young man who sailed with a pilgrim band from Limerick to New

York in the spring of 1760. So well was he known by his Irish countrymen, and so greatly was he respected, that many of his acquaintances drove long distances—sixteen miles in some instances—to bid him farewell and receive his parting words of counsel and instruction. After he had embarked, and before the vessel had unloosed its moorings, he was begged to break to them once more the bread of life. He stood on the side of the vessel, offered prayer, and breathed upon his brethren the benediction of peace. As the vessel moved away he stood with uplifted hands and benignant countenance until his face and form were lost to sight in the distance.

Arriving at New York, he became identified with the little band that held Methodist services as early as 1766, first in a private room, then in the famed “rigging loft.” Being a carpenter by trade, he did much in building the old John Street Church, making the pulpit with his own hands, and carrying many of the heavy burdens of such a pio-

neer effort on his great, consecrated heart. In 1770 he removed to Camden, organized a society, preached the Gospel, and was appointed justice of the peace. In 1775 he received a severe injury while mowing in his meadow, and shortly afterward died, lamented by his fellow-laborers and revered by the Church until now. He was not a great preacher, but a consistent character and a useful man. In 1873 the National Local Preachers Association erected a marble monument, suitably inscribed, to perpetuate his memory as "the founder of American Methodism."

CAPTAIN WEBB

The most active of the pioneer preachers of America was Captain Thomas Webb, a soldier in the British army who scaled the Heights of Abraham with General Wolfe at the capture of Quebec, and lost his right eye in that famous conflict. Having returned to England in 1764, he was converted under Wes-

ley's preaching and was licensed as a local preacher. About 1766 he was sent to Albany, New York, to take charge of the Barracks, under General Braddock, and paid an early visit to the society at New York, surprising Mr. Embury and his friends, but soon greatly cheering them. He wore the complete British uniform even when preaching, laying his sword on the table before him, making the most impassioned appeals and arousing the utmost enthusiasm. Mr. Wesley described him in a single sentence as "a man of fire whose word the power of God always accompanied." He made the largest subscription, thirty pounds, for the erection of John Street Church, and collected a great deal more for it. He visited Philadelphia, organized a Methodist society, and actively aided Mr. Pilmoor in the purchase of the old St. George's Church. He did missionary work in Long Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. In 1772 he returned to England and urged Mr. Wesley to send additional preachers. In

the following year he returned with Thomas Rankin and Mr. Yearby.

Captain Webb was not a profound preacher, but he was lively, produced conviction in the minds of sinners, and edified believers in love. When the Revolutionary War broke out he went back to England, built a Methodist chapel at Bristol at his own expense, and died suddenly, December 20, 1796, aged seventy-two. He has been styled "the first apostle of Methodism in America."

ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE

About the time that Mr. Embury was planting the Methodist tree in New York, and Captain Webb, to use his own language, was "felling the trees on Long Island," and some other places, there arrived another local preacher from Ireland, Mr. Robert Strawbridge, who settled on Sams Creek, in Frederick County, Maryland. Being a pious man and full of zeal, he began to preach in his own house, and elsewhere, and soon a society

was organized and a chapel built. This was the first Methodist society in Maryland, if not the first in America. Strawbridge was a good talker, a pointed preacher, and made many converts. One man who was listening to him thought him personal, and went home in disgust. He came again, however, and hid behind the people so that Strawbridge could not see him, but his character was delineated the same as before. He tried once more, hiding behind the door. The preacher took for his text, "And a man shall be as a hiding place," etc., and in the middle of his sermon cried out, "Sinner, come from your scouting hole!" The poor fellow came forward, looked the preacher in the face, and said, "You are a wizard, and the devil is in you; I will hear you no more."

Strawbridge was a very self-reliant man, or he would have sent to England for help in his pioneer labors, as the class at John Street, New York, had done. To him God was an ever-present reality, and he preached the Gos-

pel of omnipresent efficacy, traversing the wilds of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania to make it known. He raised up other preachers, too. Richard Owen, the first American Methodist preacher, was one of his converts. Within thirteen years, or in 1773, when the first statistics of the societies were gathered, it was found that five hundred of the total eleven hundred and sixty Methodists in the country were in Maryland, and one hundred more in Virginia, all largely the fruit of his energetic labors.

Such were some of the pioneer local preachers, but to pay anything like a proper tribute to local preachers as a class would require the space of volumes. They usually begin as exhorters, and often end as traveling preachers. Unless engaged as pastors, they are not under salary, and many of them, being poor men, have toiled hard at manual labor through the week to support themselves and families, and then have traveled long distances on Sunday to break the bread of life to the perishing.

EXHORTERS

The term "exhorter" first appears in the Conference Minutes in 1746. It was then provided that none should be allowed to exhort in the societies without authority from the preachers, and that this license must be renewed each year. It is probable that many exhorters had up to this point been rendering service without license, and that the rule now adopted was designed to limit their number and regulate their work.

In July, 1747, Mr. Wesley preached at St. Ives and at Sithney, and met all the stewards of the societies. He inquired how many exhorters there were, and found not fewer than eighteen in the county. He then inquired after their gifts, holiness, and the fruit of their labors. The result was that three were found to have "no gifts at all, either natural or supernatural;" that a fourth had "neither gifts nor grace" but was "a dull, empty, self-conceited man;" that a fifth had gifts but had

made shipwreck of grace; that three "had gifts and grace and had been much blessed in the work;" and that the rest might be helpful when there were no preachers around. He therefore peremptorily set aside the first five and advised the people not to hear them. The last ten he advised to take no step without consulting persons more experienced than themselves. The other three he warmly commended. This shows how determined Mr. Wesley was to make every man effective in his calling. He had no use for mere figureheads. He would not bestow an office upon anybody out of compliment. He demanded that all subordinate workers as well as the regular preachers should be competent and worthy or quit the field. Here is a rule that modern Methodists would do well to follow. It is an essential in our day as well as in his. The curse of many a society is that it is ruled by ungodly official members. Were Mr. Wesley alive he would scatter them as he did the pretentious but useless exhorters around

St. Ives. Were worldly officials eliminated from all our Quarterly Conferences a long step would be taken toward restoring Methodism to its primitive simplicity and effectiveness. Plain, pious, energetic, faithful officials are the need of thousands of societies.

In England, lay preachers are not eligible to ordination, but in America they are, and they constitute a strong force in the army of capable Christian workers. Exhorters, having no authority to preach, are not eligible to ordination, but they are very useful in evangelistic work.

It can no longer be said that lay preaching is peculiar to Methodism. Other denominations are now utilizing this arm of power. Mr. Moody was a lay preacher, and there are thousands more—teachers, exhorters, leaders, superintendents, and evangelists—who are doing as much as any class of men on earth to serve well their generation, and to minister “as of the ability which God giveth,”

PROFITING BY WOMAN'S GIFTS

METHODISM holds that all Christians should accomplish something worthy of their high calling. An active laity is as essential to success as a competent ministry. The world cannot be saved by a few preachers laboring alone. Every gift of every member must be brought into requisition. This was the plan of action in the apostolic and primitive Churches. St. Paul says, "As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches" (1 Cor. 7. 17).

During the Christian era religious responsibilities have devolved upon woman as well as upon man. Jesus emancipated woman from pagan servitude, and gave her liberty among the sons of God. St. Paul utilized woman's gifts in Christian work, and declared that in Christ "there can be no male and female" (R.

V., Gal. 3. 28). The early Christians gave to woman a conspicuous place in philanthropy and every kind of tender ministrations.

Pagan society was startled by the freedom with which Christian women went on errands of charity. "What heathen," asked Tertullian, "will suffer his wife to go about from one street to another, to the houses of strangers, to the meanest hovels indeed, to visit the heathen? What heathen will allow her to steal away to the dungeon to kiss the chain of the martyr?"

Women became the confessors of the faith under the most brutal and savage persecutions; their martyrdoms on the cross, in the bloody arena, or under frightful tortures formed the most touching incidents in Christian story. The sufferings and death of woman in the early ages of the faith forever hallowed the sex in the history of the Church. Christianity gave to woman a new position, attached to marriage a sacred value, and has been teaching man through the centuries that

the rightful position of the weaker sex is that of social, legal, and religious equality.

John Wesley knew all this, and, being a statesman as well as a student, he proceeded to reenact, in the movement he was leading, the principles and order for women which he found in the New Testament. Recognizing the truth of Shakespeare's saying that "beauty lives with kindness," and believing that the fairest and loveliest of created things was designed for God's use and glory, he directed the women of his societies to engage at once in ministering to the sick, comforting the distressed, strengthening the weak, quickening the faint, encouraging the weary, and exhorting all believers to go on to perfection.

Lowell says that "earth's noblest thing is a woman perfected," but Wesley had enacted the very regulations which gave Lowell a practical basis for his remark. Tennyson says that

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood;"

but Wesley had established the institutions in which this truth found a happy illustration.

"It has long passed for a maxim," said Wesley, "that women are only to be seen, not heard. . . . Is this doing honor to the sex? No, it is the deepest unkindness; it is horrid cruelty; it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right which the God of nature has given you. You, as well as men, are rational creatures; you, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally candidates for immortality; you, too, are called of God, as you have time, to do good unto all men."

And as he talked; so he acted. He gave woman a place among his useful agencies. He called her to do service not only as a missionary and a burden-bearer, but also to exercise her gifts as the called of God, in prayer, testimony, and exhortation. He knew that she had

the purity of character that would warrant earnestness of speech.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once observed, "There are at least two saints among the women to one among the men the world over." This agrees with Luther's remark that "when women receive the doctrine of the Gospel, they are far more fervent in faith, they hold to it more stiff and fast than men do." And this makes one think of Dean Swift's rendering of the psalm, "Oh that *men* would praise the Lord for his goodness"—the women always do so.

Wesley even went so far as to tolerate, if he did not openly encourage, woman's preaching. In 1761, when he had already shocked the prejudices of his clerical brethren by appointing unordained *men* to preach, he found himself called to decide whether *women* should not be accorded the same privilege. His action, of course, was guarded. Sarah Crosby had been leading class and talking much in public, but she became troubled in mind whether she should likewise exhort and preach.

One day she stood before a large audience at Derby, gave out a hymn, prayed, testified, and then tried to persuade others to flee from sin. This was a startling step to take, but within a few days she repeated it, and then wrote to Mr. Wesley for advice. He said:

"Hitherto, I think you have not gone too far. You could not well do less. I apprehend all you can do more is, when you meet again, to tell them simply, 'You lay me under a great difficulty. The Methodists do not allow of women preachers; neither do I take upon me any such character. But I will just nakedly tell you what is in my heart.' . . . I do not see that you have broken any law. Go on calmly and steadily."

This was the commencement, but not the end, of woman's preaching among the Methodists. Sarah Crosby continued to preach until her death, in 1804. Other women also preached, among whom were Hannah Harrison, Miss Bosanquet (afterward the wife of Fletcher), Miss Horral, Miss Newman, and

Mary Barrett. The thing was never formally sanctioned by Wesley's Conference, but, as Tyerman says, Wesley himself "connived at it." He told Miss Bosanquet when she sought his advice in 1771 that the strength of the case rested upon the question whether she had "an extraordinary call." "The whole work of God termed Methodism," said he, "is an extraordinary dispensation of Providence. Therefore, I do not wonder if several things occur therein which do not fall under ordinary rules of Discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, 'I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation.' Yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions; at Corinth in particular."

Again, in 1791, when he was eighty-eight years old, a case came up. Miss Cambridge, an Irish Methodist, had been praying and exhorting in public for some time, and a few of her hearers had pronounced her addresses "entirely irregular" and thought they "ought not to be tolerated in the Christian Church." She

wrote to Mr. Wesley for advice, and he, broad-minded man that he was, replied:

"Give them all honor, and obey them in all things as far as conscience permits. But it will not permit you to be silent when God commands you to speak; yet I would have you give as little offense as possible; and therefore I would advise you not to speak at any place where a preacher is speaking at the same time, lest you should draw away his hearers. Also, avoid the first appearance of pride or magnifying yourself. If you want books, or anything, let me know; I have your happiness much at heart."

The above was Wesley's last utterance on this subject, and certainly he did not need to say any more. He left the matter of woman's preaching entirely with woman's conscience, advising only that she bring not her attractive gifts in direct competition with those of man. He told her plainly that he had her "happiness much at heart," and suggested that he would provide books needful for preparation.

That all Methodists have taken a similar view of this question is evident from what they have done. Some branches of Methodism have gone so far as formally to license and ordain women preachers. Others have suffered the preaching to be done without license, having the command of God to individuals greatly in respect, and the happiness of those who feel themselves called "much at heart."

In all other departments of Christian work, Methodists of every form of polity have allowed full privileges to woman. How could they do otherwise with such examples of woman's usefulness before them as the New Testament and early Methodism gave? And to the credit of Methodist women be it said that wherever they have enjoyed their liberty they have refrained from the grotesque and extravagant, and have developed the type of rational, level-headed, pure-spirited, and loyal-hearted servants who have sought God's honor only.

Who can tell what the women of to-day may

do for the future of Methodism? Who can estimate the value of Barbara Heck's example and influence upon the cause we love? To her more, perhaps, than to any other person is due the praise for first stirring up the slumbering consciences of the band of immigrants who had found a humble home in the New World. It was in the house of a newly arrived relative, in 1765, that Barbara Heck's spirit was "roused to vigorous remonstrance when she found the inmates engaged in playing a game of cards. Throwing the cards into the fire, she earnestly expostulated with the culprits, and warned them most solemnly of their danger. Hastening to the residence of Philip Embury, who was her cousin, she told what she had done and added with dramatic emphasis, 'Philip, you must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands!' This appeal aroused Embury, who had been in the country nearly five years, and in October, 1766, he preached one of the first Methodist sermons in America and held

the first Methodist class meeting at its close. The congregation and the class were alike indicative of the day of small and feeble things. Five persons composed it, namely, Barbara and Paul Heck, John Lawrence, Mrs. Embury, and Betty, an African servant—this impressively foreshadowing the abiding characteristic of Methodism that she is the Church of bond and free, black and white, the gifted and the humble.”*

Barbara Heck well deserves the name of the saint of Methodism. In advanced age she could testify that from the period of her conversion, at the age of eighteen, she had never for twenty-four hours lost the testimony of her acceptance with God. She was found dead in her chair in 1804 with her well-worn German Bible upon her lap.

The first American Methodist chapel was also largely the result of Barbara Heck's importunate pleadings. The lease of the John Street (New York) property bears date March

* *The Western Pioneers*, page 8.

29, 1768. Mrs. Heck insisted that God himself had assured her that he would help in securing it. She and her husband were among the first trustees, and they contributed about sixteen dollars toward its purchase. Philip Embury was the first treasurer, and he also preached the first sermon, his text being, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10. 12). Among other observations, he remarked that "the best consecration of a pulpit was to preach a good sermon in it." And he might have added that the best sermon possible in such a pulpit is the proclamation of a Gospel which allows all Christians, women as well as men, to make it their vocation to save as many as they can.

This at least is the disposition of true Methodism, and it is the secret of her success. She says to all candidates for glory, Come in and do your best. Pray if you know how, and if you don't know how, please learn. Talk, too.

Sing, testify, exhort, shout if you must, or even preach! "Go on calmly and steadily." We apply no gags. We stifle none into abject silence. Strange to say, our practice is more liberal even than our theory. The women of Methodism are doing grandly. They are allowed their own way. Every worker finds a suitable place, and every important place finds a suitable worker. This is the philosophy of power. When you find what a person can do, and do it well, see that an opportunity is given for the performance.

Ordinarily, when inspiration moves a Christian to some special duty or mission, the ways and means for its accomplishment are provided. Woman's agency in establishing missions among women in heathen lands and in the home field affords a fine illustration of God's guiding hand in her Christian activity. The organization of the Wesleyan Women's Foreign Missionary Society in 1861, of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal

Church in 1869, of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the same Church in 1881, and of the splendid deaconess movement in 1888, all serve to prove that God directs both women and men in their special lines of usefulness, and that he sets the seal of his approval upon their obedience and fidelity in executing his inspirations.

It would be difficult to point to a movement in which providential guidance is so manifest as the deaconess cause. The modern Christian world was ripe for it. Woman's devoted heart was strangely warmed to enter it. Success in similar activities abroad, especially in zenana work and medical missions, foretokened the favor which has attended the movement here. Excellent homes and promising training schools have been founded in many cities, and doors of usefulness have been opened to the candidates as fast as they could be trained.

This is a world of suffering, much of which is hidden and unknown. Mental strain is as

tense as physical agony is keen. The relief of overtaxed devotion is often as blessed as soothing of the fevered brow, or pouring balm on an inflamed wound. Rev. S. O. Royal tells us that while pastor at Urbana, Ohio, his wife and two children were stricken with scarlet fever in a malignant form. He could find no nurse. None was willing to risk the chances with that dread disease. In his distress he wired the Cincinnati deaconess hospital for aid. Soon a telegram came, "Miss Blank will be at Urbana on the next train." She came. On entering the parsonage she said: "Now, all you weary, anxious watchers lie down and sleep. I will take entire charge of the sick and of all the interests of the home." So much for trained nursing. Mr. Royal well says: "No human being can imagine what a burden was lifted from our hearts, and what a sense of security came into our minds through the presence and words of this consecrated woman; and although our little babe was taken away by death, yet we rejoiced and

praised God that through his mercy and her skilled nursing the other dear ones were saved." The physician who attended the sick ones said, "This young deaconess is the most competent nurse I have ever had under my supervision."

That testimony will be duplicated a thousand times within the next few years. Adequate natural gifts, combined with purified Christian graces, all centered, consecrated, and trained under the auspices of these deaconess schools, will surely result in devotion unparalleled and efficiency unexcelled in the annals of woman's loving services for humanity and God.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

EARLY Methodism devoted its energies chiefly to the work of evangelization, and to the responsibility of providing facilities for fellowship. In the latter department, however, was included the idea of philanthropy. The poor, the sick, and the prisoners were the objects of deep solicitude both of preachers and people. In due time missions were founded, and Wesley's splendid maxim, "The world is my parish," came to include a world of meaning.

A religion that is big enough for the world is truly a big thing. A religion that is strong enough to endure the test of time is truly a strong thing. And a religion that is elastic enough to adapt itself to the needs of different generations and the demands of different nations and peoples is truly an elastic thing. So far, Methodism has stood these tests, and

has gloried in them. It is the same Methodism that the Wesleys founded and fostered, and yet it is not the same. It retains much of its early fire and force, and all of its firmness and elasticity, yet it has adapted itself to the changed conditions, and has taken on the *esprit de corps* and the accouterments of the age and country in which it is now working. In other words, it has done in our day exactly what it did in Wesley's day, adapted itself to the requirements of the hour. Indeed, this is its distinguishing trait. It is not a cast-iron machine, but a living spirit. It is always abreast of the age, as its founder was, and never behind the age. Had Wesley lived until now, he would probably have done much that his followers have done, and he would be ready to do whatever the times require. Methodism has grown and developed. Divine force has been running through the whole course of its history. It still retains the unique position originally laid down for it, "the friend of all and the enemy of none." It is an aggres-

sive Church, a missionary Church, a comprehensive Church, in a word, a live Church, and it proposes to demonstrate its life to all the world.

Methodism is always a religion for the present. Anything less than this is not Methodism. The Methodism we know has in it all the moral power and thought stimulus which characterized Methodism during the first fifty or sixty years of its organic existence. It moves ahead by the same tokens of inherent strength, and develops as it moves new agencies and methods of usefulness the same as in its primitive stage. The Epworth League is just as providential and timely a development for our day as the Sunday school was for its day. The woman's missionary societies, home and foreign, and the brotherhood movements, are as certainly of God as was the utilization of lay talent in other forms by Mr. Wesley.

Methodism is always a movement in the thought-life of man. It stirs the intellect just as thoroughly as it moves the heart. It orig-

inates its own facilities for usefulness as it goes along. It seems to be carried forward by that mysterious law of the conservation of forces which sees that nothing vital is lost and that all which is retained is ready at the opportune moment to blossom into being, and mature into fruit, for the edification and strengthening of the generation it serves.

The Methodism of to-day is as good as the Methodism of any other day, and better for the present time than any past phase of it could be. It has more intelligent piety, more enlightened zeal, greater consecration of wealth, a broader view of Christian duty to the heathen world, a livelier sense of obligation to itinerant heroism, a stronger conviction of the need of organized systems of charity, a wiser concern and more systematic effort for the conversion and proper training of childhood, than at any past period of its history. It is exactly the force and life we need for the mission God expects us to fulfill. With an intensified zeal and a quickened energy in

the use of the appliances it places at our command, we can push it ahead and accomplish as much with it in capturing this world for Christ as ever the fathers did. Away with the notion that a revival of old-style eccentricities would make us more efficient than we can be without it. This is not a true Methodist notion.

Methodism is progressive in all its work and ways. It has ever been its method to do precisely the thing needed in its own time. It follows the leadings of the Spirit, whether they comport with the ways of men or not. It does not fear innovations. It is willing to try a new thing when the old no longer serves. It cannot, in the very nature of the case, cling to its customs when they become effete. It casts them off and adopts newer ones. Some of our people deplore this fact, and talk about the better things of early days. They dote much upon "old-fashioned Methodism," and tell us that we need it now. They forget the truth that what is now "old" was in the day

of its power and glory fresh and new. It was an encroachment upon stereotyped methods then in vogue, and, having served its time and place, itself gave way to other appliances. The restoration of old customs would not give us the ancient power. We need the power—the revival of old-time zeal for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers, but not the old-fashioned peculiarities. These alone would not vitalize us, but paralyze. They would cut us off from the cooperation and sympathies of all other Churches in their common effort to save mankind.

Turn, my friend, from the past, and begin to live in the present. The greatest word in the Christian vocabulary is NOW! Trust in God now. Work with your brethren now. Pray and act now. Seize upon the levers now extended to your hand, open the throttle, nerve your arm for duty, keep a level head and a pure heart, and move forward upon the track of progress. When some agency different from any we now have is required for

higher efficiency in our work God will send it. He has stood by Methodism faithfully thus far. He has kept her altars clean, her doctrines pure, her services lively, and he has used her agencies marvelously in the salvation of sinners and the purification of believers.

The manner in which the Epworth League has, within half a generation, sprung into the foremost place in the thought, legislation, and endeavor of the Church is unmistakable evidence that the divine mind suggested it to its human originators. It is a "wheel within a wheel," and has obtained such momentum in its onward course that its revolutions will probably never cease.

So with the deaconess establishment. What a flame of holy fire has spread through the Church from the little spark so recently fanned into existence! Already it has extended to almost every nook and corner of our Zion. Its influence and results are so benign that few can withhold their sympathy from it. Just think what the official duties

of a deaconess are: "To minister to the poor, care for the sick, provide for the orphan, comfort the sorrowing, seek the wandering, save the sinning, and, relinquishing all other pursuits, to devote herself to these and other forms of Christian labor." Was a more Christlike mission ever designated in terser or more expressive and winning terms? Would not Wesley himself have gloried in such an agency with all its diversified plans for humanitarian and Christian usefulness. Most certainly he would. And if disembodied spirits know anything about the activities of spirits still enshrined in clay, he rejoices now and is glad that such an organization has a place in Methodism.

And what shall be said of all the assemblies, associations, and unions which share so prominently the thought and sympathy of Methodism to-day? Are they not born of the Spirit that moved the Nazarene to die for us all? Do they not bear the impress of the same Mind that made Wesley the benefactor

and helper of his kind? Do they not voice the sentiment of redeemed humanity as unmistakably as any of the appeals which fell from the fire-touched lips of our fathers in the Gospel? Verily, yes. They are the institutions for our times. They meet the demand. They have the promise of triumph.

The great problem to be solved by living Methodism is how to redeem the cities. These are the centers of throbbing life and power. The bad as well as the good finds in them a congenial home. Their possibilities of corruption and injury cannot be measured. The demand upon character, prayer, sacrifice, and practical effort for their redemption cannot be estimated. If these cities are ever saved some one must pour out his life for them as Jesus poured out his pity over Jerusalem. One, did I say? Yea, many! It will cost tears and treasure, mental contests, heart agonies, and painful crucifixions to save our cities. But it must be done. Our city evangelization unions, alliances, and mission bands

must be encouraged and abundantly sustained. God is turning his searchlight into the cities to find the elect in whom he may put his Spirit—persons to plead, persons to pray, persons to give, persons to throw themselves into the battle with sin and death until Satan is expelled and the cities are redeemed.

Among other modern phases of Methodist philanthropy, hospital service combined with Florence Nightingale mission work attracts much sympathy. Up to the year 1881 “the people called Methodists” had not erected a full-fledged hospital anywhere on earth. They had been too intent on saving souls to give great attention to the healing and care of bodies. But now their eyes are open to the truth which Wesley discovered by personal philanthropies, that timely aid to the sick, the wounded, the indigent, and the unfortunate is not only a high Christian duty, but an advantageous policy in gaining the respect of men and in evangelism as an ulterior purpose. The encouraging philanthropic enterprises in

several cities, the social settlements, immigrant homes, mission institutes, training schools, orphanages, asylums, industrial schools, refuges for outcasts, homes for the aged, mission houses, and other auxiliaries, all added to the numerous official benevolences and general undertakings of the Church, bespeak the enlarged sympathy and broadened conception of Methodism in respect to the claims of universal brotherhood upon the goodwill, generosity, and cooperation of those whom Christ has purified and set free.

The current developments in Methodist life certainly prove that vitality of conviction has not died out. Never before was there such an uprising for intellectual culture and moral training in all departments of work. Our people are seeking to be at their best. Our Conferences are awake to the need of educated ministers. Our young people aspire after knowledge. Our old people grow young again as they unite with the "circles" and "clubs" (the original band of Methodists was nick-

named "the Holy Club") to gain better preparation of mind and heart for the discharge of duties which confront us all.

Perhaps our wisest safeguard in the present broadening of our thought is a deepening of our spiritual life. We must not drift away from the experience of the fathers. We must not let go the witness of the Spirit nor the striving after perfect love. Theories are good, but verities are better. New methods and adaptations are wise, but keep them refreshed by the vital stream which ever flows from the hills of God.

DISCARDED CUSTOMS

IN the initial stages of every new movement some transitory things appear, just as in the growth of a tree some branches or leaves or fruit appear which ultimately droop and die. Among those in Methodism was the

BAND MEETING,

which was intended to produce a severe discipline, and in this respect probably defeated itself.

The band meeting was not original with Methodism. Its charter was entitled "Orders of a Religious Society, met together in obedience to the command of God by St. James, chap. 5. 16—'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.'"

The bands were composed of from five to ten persons, all of one sex, and of similar age and condition in life. The members were bound to observe fasting, secret prayer, the searching of the Scriptures, the use of the Sacraments, and other means of grace. They were to deny themselves in the most rigid manner, and to walk before God blameless all the days of their lives. So far so good. But the questions propounded were of so searching and personal a character as to render them objectionable, if not offensive, to sensitive minds. Take these:

“Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?

“Do you desire to be told of your faults, and that plain and home?

“Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?

“Do you desire, in doing this, that we should come close, cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?”

The foregoing were occasional questions, but the following were asked at every meeting:

"1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?

"2. What temptations have you met with?

"3. How were you delivered?

"4. What have you thought, said, or done of which you doubt whether it was sin or not?"

All the directions given to the bands were of the same rigorous pattern, reaching to the most minute details of dress, conversation, habits, and business transactions. The advantages which flowed from so close and sacred a union were many and great, and no doubt hundreds of souls were helped amazingly in their walk with God, but the cry soon arose that the bands were "mere popery," "man's invention," and their decay began.

FIELD PREACHING

Another agency employed by these sagacious evangelists, and perhaps the most novel

and striking of all, was preaching in the open fields. It arose from two circumstances: 1. The opposition of the Church of England clergy, who refused the use of their pulpits to the Methodists. 2. The inadequacy of any of the houses of worship to hold the crowds that came to hear these earnest preachers.

Mr. Whitefield introduced field preaching in England. Wesley did not like it at first. He considered "the saving of souls almost a sin if not done in a church." Besides this, he instinctively shrank from the coarse contacts which the practice involved. "What a marvel," he said, "the devil does not like street preaching. No more do I. I like a soft cushion and a handsome pulpit." But he thrust aside his own tastes, and went out to endure scorn and abuse while proclaiming the Gospel to untold thousands wherever they would hear him. His first open-air sermon was preached at Bristol, April 2, 1739, and his last was in the same place in 1790, about five months before his death. Thus his efforts

through this fruitful scheme covered a period of more than fifty years. The energy of God was in it too. One writer has ventured to say that "apart from open-air preaching, Methodism would never have had an existence." Whitefield often preached to audiences of ten thousand people. So did Charles Wesley. They literally went out into the highways and compelled people to come in. The torch of truth they held aloft had been kindled on the altar of their own regenerated hearts, and it proved a beacon light to unnumbered thousands who otherwise would never have been led into the way of life.

Of course there were strenuous objections to this conspicuous innovation, just as there were to everything else that proved successful in gathering in the outcasts, but these objections were to these heralds of truth only as so many idle tales or whiffs of empty air. They justified themselves in this practice by pointing out the necessity for it. "1. Because our calling is to save that which is lost.

Now, we cannot expect the wanderers from God to seek us. It is our part to go and seek them. 2. Because we are more peculiarly called, by going out into the highways and hedges (which none will do if we do not) to compel them to come in. 3. Because that reason against it is not good, 'The house will hold all that come.' The house may hold all that will come to the house, but not all that would come to the field. 4. Because we have always found a greater blessing in field preaching than in any other preaching whatever." This was in 1747, and it serves to show how thoroughly the minds of these men were imbued with the grand idea that the chief mission of Christian men is by any or all means to save the lost.

SEPARATE SITTINGS

Mr. Wesley wanted his congregations seated to advantage for hearing the Gospel. He directed that the preaching houses should be built in "octagon form," as best for the voice

and more commodious. He wanted no pews, and "no backs to the seats." He did want aisles on each side, and the seats "parted in the middle by a rail running all along, to divide the men from the women." The peculiar tastes and habits of his own followers, and the disposition and character of the crowds that thronged to hear him, rendered this regulation fitting and necessary. He declared that if he came into one of his new churches and saw the men and women sitting together he would immediately go out. The separation of the sexes in worship continued for many years, but the adoption of pewed churches, with provision for family sittings, brought the custom to an end.

"THE AMEN CORNER"

When men and women sat apart it was very natural for the men of fervent spirit to cluster together near the pulpit or altar, and owing to their habit of responding "Amen" to

every forcible sentiment the seats they habitually occupied took the name of "the Amen corner."

The custom of responding with an "Amen" was not original with Methodism, however. In the early Christian Church all the worshipers uttered "Amen" at the close of prayer. St. Jerome says this "united voice of the people sounded like the fall of water or the noise of thunder." In the Church of England, the people are directed at the end of all prayers to answer, "Amen!" The early Methodists having been trained in the Church of England, transferred this practice into extempore prayer, and into preaching and testimony meetings also.

It is a pity that the custom should have passed away. In earnest worship the soul finds relief in expressions of approval and praise. Any possible abuses of the privilege are more than offset by the encouragement given to a speaker or petitioner, and the reflex influence upon the congregation.

FEATURES THAT SHOULD LIVE

No good custom should be discarded simply because it is old, nor shunned because it is new. If a custom has warrant in Scripture, or is sanctioned by utility, it is entitled to defense when assailed, and to new adjustment when found waning or deficient.

Methodism has some peculiar usages which have served a noble purpose and which have grafted themselves upon its system. Future conditions may render them unnecessary, in which case they will be relegated to the shades, just as the band meeting has been. At present they seem to be almost indispensable. Take, for instance,

PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIP

The period of probation fixed by Mr. Wesley was two months, but in the parent body

of American Methodism it has always been six months. Efforts have been made to abolish this system, but in a revival Church, where whole multitudes are admitted at one time, it seems proper and wise that a trial period should precede full membership.

This usage points two ways—toward the Church and toward the probationer. It gives the Church an opportunity to study the candidates while extending to them all her spiritual rights and privileges, and it gives the candidates an opportunity to study the doctrines, polity, and usages of the Church while giving to her the zeal and devotion of their first love. It is a just, safe, and practicable arrangement.

Another excellent custom is that of

FREE SEATS

In turning Gospel preachers loose upon the world, Methodism sought to have worshipers free in the Church, and this custom has always

been popular. The first subscription paper circulated in America asked for funds to erect a house "where the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be preached without distinction of sect or party." Methodism erects chapels where rich and poor meet together, the Lord being the Maker of them all. The free-seat system has saved thousands to the Church, and should be retained. Plain chapels and free pews where the masses may feel at home and not be crushed by heavy financial burdens are conditions of religious success. In the cathedral at Cologne the poorest laborer feels at home because its benches are of wood and its floor is bare. Similar conditions should ever characterize Methodist meetinghouses.

Another feature is

THE COLLECTION PLATE

Methodism would hardly be Methodism without a collection plate. At the organization of our Church, in 1784, the following provision was incorporated in the Discipline:

"How many collections are to be made in a year?

"Ans. 1. A quarterly collection to support the preachers, and when that is deficient, a public quarterly collection.

"2. A yearly collection for church building.

"3. A collection at love feasts, and on sacramental occasions, for the poor of our society.

"4. An annual collection or subscription for the college.

"5. An annual collection for Conference contingencies."

If the above collections yielded an overplus it was to be divided among the poor, to make deficiencies in pastors' salaries, and to plant missions in distant parts of the continent. In our days the number of annual collections has not grown beautifully less.

CHOIRS AND ORGANS

Early Methodism had no objections to choirs and organs to *lead* in the singing, but

did object to fiddlers, and to merely artistic music of any sort. The Methodists always wanted their instruments of music to bear a "good report of them which are without." On one occasion a violinist suggested to his pastor the propriety of changing the couplet,

"O may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound,"

So that it would read,

"O may my heart be tuned within,
Like David's sacred violin."

The preacher was a wit, and suggested rather that the couplet should read,

"O may my heart go diddle, diddle,
Like Uncle David's holy fiddle."

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

Let us sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. Choirs may do to *lead*, but let all the people sing. Methodism has sung many souls into the kingdom of God. She has incorporated into her hymns so much of Gospel truth that her singing is a chant of argu-

ment. Dr. Talmage once said that either Methodist throats are different or their hearts are different. They sang their way all over England, and the howling of persecution could not silence them. They sang their way across the Atlantic, and the ocean hurricane could not beat down the song. They sang their way all through those Western wilds, and the moaning of the wildwood could not overpower their melody. Let them not fall from grace and surrender to choirs this essential feature of noble worship.

FREEDOM AS TO MODE

As an illustration of Methodist freedom as to modes of worship, take the following standing rules:

“Let persons who have scruples concerning the receiving of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper kneeling be permitted to receive it either standing or sitting.”

“Let every adult person, and the parents of

every child to be baptized, have the choice of either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion."

The foregoing rules represent the spirit of Methodism. Broad, liberal, accommodating, it leaves open to the individual conscience all nonessentials of worship and custom.

The sacraments are to be *used* by Christians, not *abused* by ecclesiastical edicts. These sacraments are designed for universal application, and must not be transformed into cast-iron regulations which limit and debase them.

Wesley held that baptism is the initiatory sacrament which enters us into covenant with God; that it was instituted in the room of circumcision as a sign and seal of that covenant; that the matter of this sacrament is water because its natural power of cleansing makes it a fit symbol; that the mode of applying it is dipping, sprinkling, or pouring because the Scriptures nowhere stipulate, either by express precept or example, in which of these ways it shall be done. The word *bap-*

tize, as used in the New Testament, while the most expressive word that could have been selected to represent the seal of the new covenant, contains no force or meaning which necessitates the choice of immersion as its only proper mode. The most reliable scholarship teaches that the word represents a *result* rather than a *process*, a *cleansing* rather than a *method* of cleansing. Thus we are told that "John truly baptized with water." His cleansing was outward and formal. "But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The pentecostal cleansing was inward and spiritual.

The word "baptism" has thus come to have a specific meaning, and can by no narrow, sectarian process (such as the attempt to substitute the word "immerse" for it) be successfully changed. It has entered into the service of all Churches, in all lands, and for all time, and the day is not far distant when the word, clothed with the dignity of crystalline permanence, will be lifted out of the arena of debate.

LOVE FEASTS

The love feast is a feast of love. The first one in Methodism, held December 9, 1759, began and ended with thanksgiving and prayer. Mr. Wesley declares that it was celebrated "in so decent and solemn a manner that a Christian of the apostolic age would have allowed it to be worthy of Christ." It was designed to evince brotherly affection and Christian fellowship by taking together "a little plain cake and water." In primitive days the feast was more elaborate, and watchfulness was required to prevent "excess in eating and drinking." In England the "plain cake" has given place to common biscuits. In some parts of India the water is displaced by coffee. In America clear water and plain bread serve as the sole visible elements of the feast. But the fellowship and brotherly affection are everywhere the same. It is a happy assembly and will remain as long as there are Christians to testify and love to flow. It is the

only thing among us approximating to a festival, and the freedom of its spirit and voluntariness of its service have made it ever popular.

THE CLASS MEETING

The class meeting arose in this way: Wesley's meetinghouse which he built in Bristol in 1739 had an embarrassing debt, and on February 15, 1742, he called a meeting of the principal members to determine what could be done. One said, "Let every member of the society give a penny a week till the debt is paid." Another answered, "Many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it." "Then," said the former, "put eleven of the poorest with me; and if they can give anything, well; I will call on them weekly; and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on your neighbors weekly; receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." It was done, and

the arrangement struck Wesley as the very thing he wanted. He then interviewed the collectors and told them, in addition to collecting money, "to make particular inquiry into the behavior of the members whom they visited." They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected and thrust out. Within six weeks Wesley introduced the same plan in London, and thus class meetings began.

The advantages flowing from these "prudential regulations" were so great that Wesley to his dying day praised God for them. The fellowship, brotherliness, mutual burden-bearing, and fidelity which they promoted were of infinite value. Complaints of poor leadership arose, but the best available men were always appointed, and the class meeting became a distinctive and perpetual feature of the Methodist economy.

At first the leaders called upon the members in their own homes, but as this required so much time it was found more practicable for all to meet together in some convenient place,

there to testify, to be exhorted, reproofed, or comforted as occasion required.

To ascertain who belonged to the society, and to prevent designing persons from imposing upon him, Wesley gave to each of the serious-minded attendants a ticket, on which was printed a Scripture text, the date of issuance, and the person's name. Only ticket-holders were considered members. The tickets were renewed quarterly. All were eager to secure these vouchers of good standing, and the membership rolls were thus kept fresh and reliable. Those who habitually neglected class were, after proper reproof, "laid aside," and hence no form of trial was necessary to keep the class lists well purged. It should be remembered that no church had yet been organized. The "classes" were auxiliary to the "societies," and the societies were simply informal religious organizations for the development of a good financial system and for promotion of the spiritual life.

Wesley was considered the spiritual father

and guide of all the Methodists, as he was literally the head of the entire system, and to him unusual authority was allowed to the day of his death. Some members chafed not a little under the strict surveillance of the class leader plan, a few denounced it as unscriptural, but those who faithfully availed themselves of its peculiar advantages were helped amazingly in their spirituality, sympathy, and practical usefulness.

THE PRAYER SERVICE

Methodism began in a prayer meeting, and attendance at the prayer meeting is a part of our unwritten law. To bring something—a song, a thanksgiving, a praise or a prayer—as an offering unto the Lord, is also a part of the unwritten law. In the old “scheme of self-examination” devised by Mr. Wesley these questions were propounded: “Have I prayed with fervor? at going in and out of church? in the church? morning and evening in pri-

vate? with my friends at rising? before lying down? at my work? Have I prayed for humility, faith, hope, love?" Prayer has ever been inculcated as the very spirit and life of Methodism; the services for prayer have been among the richest and most helpful of all our means of grace.

KNEELING IN PRAYER

The historic and correct Disciplinary attitude of Methodists in prayer is that of kneeling. The Discipline says: "Let the people be earnestly exhorted to take part in the public worship of God, first in singing, second in prayer, in the scriptural attitude of kneeling."

There is an ancient tradition that the apostle James spent so much time on his knees that the skin became calloused almost like bone. At the dedication of the temple Solomon stood upon his knees to pray. In 1 Kings 8. 22 it is said that "Solomon stood

before the altar." But in the fifty-fourth verse the explanation appears: "And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven." The passage in 2 Chron. 13 confirms the above. Read: "For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, and said," etc. Solomon's attitude while praying was that of "*kneeling upon his knees*," not standing upon his feet. So with King David. When he called upon the people to worship he said: "Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker (Psa. 95. 6). In 2 Sam. 7. 18 and 1 Chron. 17. 16 it is stated that David "sat." There is no evidence that he

stood upon his feet in prayer. When Daniel prayed he "kneeled three times a day on his knees" (Dan. 6. 10). Jesus in the garden agony "kneeled down and prayed" (Luke 22. 41). Surely the servant is not better than his Lord. When Stephen prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers "he kneeled down" (Acts 7. 60), although to do so was to place himself perfectly at the mercy of his executioners. Peter "kneeled and prayed" (Acts 9. 40). Paul "kneeled and prayed" (Acts 20. 36). Paul's brethren "kneeled on the shore and prayed" (Acts 21. 5). The suppliants who sought mercy from Christ habitually kneeled. See Matt. 17. 14; Mark 1. 40, 10. 17, etc. No such divine authority can be quoted in favor of standing or any other posture as an attitude of prayer. The Pharisee "stood and prayed," but his prayer did not avail, while the publican humbled himself, that is, he would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven, and he went to his house justified (Luke 18. 11-13).

THE FUTURE

METHODISM has had a glorious past. Her history of a little more than one century and a half is radiant with spiritual light. She stands before the world as the daughter of Providence, nurtured and matured, under God's loving protection and care. She is not faultless—far from it; but she bears upon her person the trophies of conquest, and wears upon her brow the expression of trust and determination for a noble future. What is her prospect?

A HUNDRED YEARS TO COME

Some fifty years ago the social circles of America were ringing with the melody of a song entitled "A Hundred Years to Come." The sentimental lines flowed from musical lips in words like these:

"Where, where, will be the birds that sing
A hundred years to come ?
The flowers that now in beauty spring
A hundred years to come ?
The rosy lips, the lofty brow,
The heart that beats so gayly now,
O, where will be love's beaming eye,
Joy's sparkling smile or sorrow's sigh,
A hundred years to come ?

"Who'll tread for gold this busy street
A hundred years to come ?
Who'll tread yon aisle with willing feet
A hundred years to come ?
Pale, trembling age, and fiery youth,
And childhood with its heart of truth,
The rich, the poor, on land and sea,
Where will the mighty millions be
A hundred years to come ?

"We all within our graves will sleep
A hundred years to come.
No living soul for us will weep
A hundred years to come.
But other men our fields will till,
And others then our places fill,
And other birds will sing as gay,
And bright the sunshine as to-day,
A hundred years to come."

To this rather gloomy view of the outcome
of a hundred years a more hopeful poet pro-
tested, and penned this addendum :

"What though we're numbered with the dead
A hundred years to come ;
What though for us no tears be shed
A hundred years to come ?

“Our Saviour slept within the tomb,
And shall we fear its shadowy gloom ?
Ah, no ! Triumphant faith will sing
That death hath lost its venom’d sting
Since Christ our Lord has come.”

If we turn from the “birds” and “flowers,” the “rosy lips” and “lofty brows,” and even from the more serious descriptions of human life and ambition, and apply this sentiment to the doctrines, powers, and customs of our beloved Methodism, asking where or what these shall be “a hundred years to come,” who can give the answer? What is the outlook? what the tendency?

AN ENDURING ELEMENT

Of one thing there is certainty, namely, that, whatever may be the future of organic Methodism, the power or weakness of her Church life, the permanence or transitoriness of her ecclesiastical forms, the popularity or repulsiveness of her authoritative discipline, the essential principles of Methodism are sure to abide.

Wesley himself thought so. His great soul was permeated with the hope that the germ God had planted through him and others was to live, grow, flourish, and abound to the end of time. He looked upon Methodism not only as a signal revival of religion, but as a principal preparation for the glory of the latter days, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in and all Israel shall be saved. Up to the present time at least his hope seems to have been well founded. The Methodist tree is firmly rooted. Its substance is being fed and nourished from rich and deep soils. The various branches are growing encouragingly, and the fruits are abounding luxuriantly.

Is the ax ever to be laid at the root of this tree? Is the trunk to be cut down, the branches destroyed, and the roots pulled up? Is another tree to be planted in its place, and all that we now behold of is power and beauty and glory to become a forgotten dream.

We cannot think so. It is inconceivable that such fundamental truths as those upon which Methodism is based, and such broad and vigorous principles as those by which it acts, should be supplanted, or relegated to the rear, by any new discoveries, advancements, or appliances of which mankind is capable.

The itinerancy may pass away, pastoral charges become a thing of the past, Annual Conferences end, ecclesiastical structure crumble, church architecture undergo transformation, polity, custom, and form be revolutionized, but so long as man has a soul to save and there is evidence of a God in Israel the real essence of Methodism—conscious peace through justifying faith preceded by repentance—must command the attention and sympathy of mankind.

LIVING PRINCIPLES

And who can conceive of principles more likely to commend themselves to the approba-

tion of all serious minds than these: The saved sinner to become a working Christian; the cleansed heart to be an aspirant for purity; the heir of God a brother of men; the servant of Christ a pleader for righteousness; the recipient of bounty a bestower of good; the free man in Christ a herald of liberty; the candidate for heaven an exemplar to the world; and the fallible believer the impersonation of humility and liberality.

If such a spirit will not adorn the sturdy character and polished mind of the future, in the name of reason, what would do so? It is not necessary, nor would it be true, to affirm that Methodism alone embodies this spirit, nor that these and other phases of Methodist life possess exclusive fitness for future exemplification, but it is appropriate to say that whatever system of truth, or plan of work, or form of belief may secure the final hold upon human society, and meet its utmost spiritual necessities, it will of a surety contain within itself the real heart and the vital essence of

the living, healing plant which has come into view under the name of Methodism.

EBB AND FLOW

Let no man say that because there are and have been fluctuations in the growth and development of the Methodist tree, therefore it is lacking in the elements of stability and vitality necessary to unending existence. Fluctuation characterizes all religions. Ebb and flow mark every tide. Variations attend all cycles. Evolution implies involution. The whole course of human history is dotted by changes, uprisings and recedings, limitations and extensions, characteristic of all life and progress.

A MISLEADING HABIT

The disposition to compare the moral conditions of to-day with those of some other generation or century is very natural, and

may also be very misleading. We know more about our own times, the state of the Church, the condition of society, and the peculiar drift and status of our own personal consciousness than we do about those of the past. History perpetuates very little that mankind can seize upon. It is only an outline at best, and marked by all the bias and misconceptions that necessarily mar the best work of the wisest minds.

Likewise the tendency to judge living thinkers and workers with brilliant leaders and great reformers who achieved their mission and had their day is unfair and hurtful. That Methodism has not produced another Wesley cannot be laid to its charge. Christianity has not produced a second Paul. Every age has its reformers. The future will be as the past. New workers will arise. Revivalists will come. Discerners of essential truth will separate the vital from the superfluous, and apply with new force the principles that shall endure. Interpreters of the word will discover new mean-

ings in the promises, new applications in the warnings, new depths in the doctrines, and new riches in the numberless passages which hitherto have been misunderstood or ignored. Dr. Daniel Steele suggests that the Church is in its infancy as to the realization or spiritual blessing, just as mankind is in babyhood in its application of electricity to human utilities. Many Christians seem to think that their first days in grace are necessarily their best days, their sweetest, brightest, and richest spiritual experiences. All wrong. God has prepared for every one of his children suppremer triumphs, diviner baptisms, holier advancements, and more ecstatic joys than their eyes have seen, or ears heard, or hearts felt. The life more abundant should be a blessed realization with all those who pretend to believe that "he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Methodists must lead the van in all stages of true Christian experience. They must hold firmly to Bible standards and reach out

bravely for providential openings. They must keep their ranks free from insane doctrinal speculators and hopeless spiritual apostates. They must apply vigorous discipline when necessary, and thus lop off the branches which bear no fruit to the glory of God and the honor of the Church. They must keep their distinctive mission conspicuously in sight and strive to make their organization a living power in accomplishing that to which God has called them.

PROFIT BY EXPERIENCE

We must profit by experience. Past defects must sharpen our wits to avoid future failures. If we have been losing sight of our true mission we must brush away the gathering cobwebs and gain clear vision for the future. We must insist upon a radical change of heart, and a holy, fruitful life as the normal condition and privilege of every believer. We must guard against those intrusions of worldliness, formalism, and listlessness which would

sap our strength and leave us to wither and die. Keep the holy fire burning. Keep the spiritual revival at white heat. Preach the Gospel of the Holy Ghost. Infuse our leagues, Sunday schools, and other societies with the spirit of evangelism, of philanthropic service, and of world-wide conquest. Keep low at the cross, but high in the forefront of action. Utilize living forces upon a broader and more effective scale. The lay talent of the Church can be turned to better account. Ministers must rally the members to their aid. Those social qualities and tendencies in which the seers find hope, or alarm, as the case may be, must be grasped, developed, curbed, or transformed so as to give to the Christian movement all the force and impetus possible from complete human cooperation with divine power. The popular demand that a pastor must invariably be an entertaining speaker must be met to a large extent by the utilization of the dormant talent of the pew. Leadership, instruction, and spiritual counsel must become

the distinguishing forces in pulpit and pastoral work, while strong cooperation, quick execution, constant support, unswerving fidelity, intelligent application, and loyal, lively upholding of all things good, pure, and lovely must become the dominant efforts of pew and home service.

Methodism must hitch up her enginery to reform movements. She has the practical and secure basis for true reforms. Get the heart clean, and you will have less trouble in keeping the lips from wine, the hands from unholy traffic, the feet from unrighteous errands, the tongue from false arguments, and all the other members of the body from those practices and tendencies which destroy humanity and offend God.

I believe in the unity of reform. Heart reformation includes all other reformations. Methodism must carry heart reformation into the temperance cause, the labor agitation, the socialistic craze, the white ribbon movement, and a hundred other things. Evan-

gelism is the key to all the successful humanitarianisms of the age. But to be adepts in the application of that key we must be a people born of God ourselves, trained in all the wisdom of revelation, experience, and consecrated knowledge, and we must go with bread in our arms for the poor, kindness in our spirits for the unfortunate, medicine in our chests for the suffering, love in our souls for the outcast and forsaken, truth upon our lips for the untaught, and testimony upon our tongues for the unbelieving and despairing. There is no reason why Methodism should not gird herself to-day for the God-given mission of to-morrow. She is equipped for advance. Her cause has the approval of earth and the sanction of heaven. Her history is ablaze with divine fire, and her forces are mustered in the clearest light of the age. The weapons of her warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Forward, O army of the saved! Keep step to the music of the skies! Trust in the

great Captain of salvation! Be regulated by the unfoldings of the word! Rely on the might of the Spirit! Make no compromises with the foe! Insist on surrender in the name of God! Transform the enemies of truth into the friends of Jesus and the allies of the King!

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